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CHRISTIAN

RESOLUTIONS:

By WILLIAM BEVERIDGE, D. D.
late Lord Bishop of St. ASAPH. 16

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P R E F A C E.

IF ye know these things, says our blessed

Lord, *happy are ye if ye do them.* The knowledge of Gospel-truths is a mercy for which we can never be sufficiently thankful: For, prophets and righteous men desired to see the things which we see, and were not favoured with the glorious Revelation; angels *pry into* this mystery of love, (1 Pet. i. 12.) and cannot discover its length, and breadth, and depth, and height. But, it is certain, the more light we enjoy, the greater will our condemnation be, excepting our tempers and lives are according to the Gospel of Christ.

The Editor of the following excellent RESOLUTIONS perceives, with grief, that too many professors of Christianity in this day are losing time, by contending about technical terms, modes of worship, and men's characters; and he, being persuaded that all agree in this important truth, *Without holiness no man shall see the Lord,* strongly recommends

mends to them, an attentive perusal of this little book. It will shew them, what they ought to be, and what they ought to do; and, by a divine blessing, it will help them to *walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called.*



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AS obedience without faith is impossible, so faith without obedience is vain and unprofitable: *For as the body, says St. James, without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also; James ii. 26.* Having therefore, I hope, laid a sure foundation, by resolving what, and how, to believe, I shall now, by the grace of God, resolve so to order my conversation, in all circumstances and conditions of life, as to raise a good superstructure upon it, and to finish the work God has given me to do; *i. e.* so to love and please God in this world, as to enjoy and be happy with him for ever in the next. And it is absolutely necessary, that I should be speedy and serious in these resolutions; especially when I reflect with myself, how much of my time I have already spent upon the vanities and follies of youth, and how much enhanced and increased this work, by acquired guilt, by settled and repeated habits of sin, which are not without great difficulty to be removed. My heart, alas! is now more hardened in iniquity, more puffed with pride, and more averse from God, than when I first entered into covenant with him; and I have added many actual sins and provocations to my original guilt, and pollution: Instead of glorifying God, I have dishonoured him; and, instead of working out my own salvation, I have taken pleasure and delight in such things, as would, in the end, be my ruin and destruction. So that be-
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fore I can be able to make any progress in the duties of religion, or walk in the paths that lead to life, I must first be freed and disentangled from these weights and incumbrances that clog and retard me in my spiritual course; I must have my heart cleansed and softened, humbled and converted to God, and all my transgressions purged and pardoned by the merits of my Redeemer. And then being fully persuaded, that there is no way for me to come to the joys of heaven, but by walking according to the strictest rules of holiness upon earth, I must endeavour for the future, by a thorough change and reformation of my life, to act in conformity to the divine will and pleasure in all things, and perfect holiness in the fear of the LORD: For the Most High has told me in his word, that *without holiness on man shall see the Lord.*

In order, therefore, to qualify myself for this happiness, it will be necessary for me to settle firm and steady resolutions; to fulfil my duty, in all the several branches of it, to God, my neighbour, and myself; and to take care these resolutions be put in practice, according to the following method.

R E S O L U T I O N I.

I am resolved, by the Grace of God, to walk by Rules; and therefore think it necessary to resolve upon the Rules to walk by.

AND this rather, because I perceive the want of such rules has been the occasion of all, or most of my miscarriages. For, what other reason can I assign to myself, for having trifled and sinned away so much time, as I have done in my younger years, but because I did not thoroughly resolve to spend it better? What is the reason, I have hitherto lived so unserviceably to God, so unprofitably to others, and so sinfully against my own soul; but because I did not apply myself with that sincerity of

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of resolution, diligence, and circumspection, as a wise man ought to have done, to discharge my duty in these particulars? I have, indeed, often resolved to bid adieu to my sins and follies, and to enter upon a new course of life; but these resolutions being not rightly formed upon steady principles, the first temptation made way for a relapse, and the same bait that first allured me, has no sooner been thrown in my way, but I have been as ready to catch at it again, and as greedy to swallow it as ever. At other times, I have acted without any thought or resolution at all; and then, though some of my actions might be good in themselves, yet being done by chance, and without any true design or intention, they could not be imputed to me as good, but rather the quite contrary: So that, in this respect, the want of resolution has not only been the occasion of my sinful actions, but the corruption of my good ones too. And shall I still go on in this loose and careless manner, as I have formerly done? No, I now resolve with myself, in the presence of the Most High and Eternal God, not only in general, to walk by rule, but to fix the rule I design to walk by; so that, in all my thoughts, and words, and actions, in all places, companies, relations, and conditions, I may still have a sure guide at hand to direct me, such a one as I can safely depend upon without any danger of being deceived, or misled; *i. e.* the holy Scripture. And therefore,

RESOLUTION II.

I am resolved, by the Grace of God, to make the Divine Word the Rule of all the Rules I propose to myself.

AS the will of God is the rule and measure of all that is good, so there is nothing deserves that name, but what is agreeable and conformable thereto :

thereto : And this will being fully revealed and contained in the holy Scripture, it will be necessary for me in directing my course over the ocean of this world, that I should fix my eye continually upon this star, steer by this compass, and make it the only land-mark, by which I am to be guided to my wished-for haven. I must not therefore have recourse to the inward workings of my own roving fancy, or the corrupt dictates of my own carnal reason : These are but blind guides, and will certainly lead me into the ditch of error, heresy, and irreligion, which in these our self-admiring days, so many poor souls have been plunged in. Alas ! how many hath the impetuous torrent of blind zeal and erroneous conscience, born down into a will-worship, and voluntary subjection of themselves to the spurious offspring of their own deluded fancies ! If the light that is within them doth but dictate any thing to be done ; or rather, if the whimsy doth but take them, that they must do thus or thus, they presently set about it, without ever consulting the sacred writings, to see whether it is acceptable to God, or displeasing to him. Whereas, for my own part, I know not how any thing should be worthy of God's accepting, that is not of God's commanding. I am sure the word of God is the good old way that will certainly bring me to my Father's house ; for how should that way but lead to heaven, which Truth itself has chalked out for me ? Not as if this was necessary, that every one of my resolutions should be contained, word for word, in the holy Scripture ; it is sufficient that they be implied in, and agreeable thereto. So that, though the manner of my expressions may not be found in the word of God, yet the matter of my resolutions may be clearly drawn from thence.—But let me dive a little into the depth of my sinful heart ! What is the reason of my thus resolving upon such an exact conformity to the will and word of God ?

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God? Is it to work my way to heaven with my own hands? to purchase an inheritance in the land of Canaan, with the price of my own holiness and religion? or to swim over the ocean of this world, into the haven of happiness, upon the empty bladders of my own resolutions? No.

RESOLUTION III.

I am resolved, that as I am not able to think or do any thing that is good, without the Influence of the Divine Grace; so I will not pretend to merit any favour from God, upon account of any thing I do for his Glory and Service.

AND, indeed, I may very well put this resolution amongst the rest; for should I resolve to perform my resolutions by mine own strength, I might as well resolve never to perform them at all: For truth itself, and mine own woful experience hath convinced me, that I am not able, of myself, so much as to think a good thought: And how, then, shall I be able, of myself, to resolve upon rules of holiness according to the Word of God, or to order my conversation according to these resolutions, without the concurrence of the divine grace? Alas! should the great God be pleased to leave me to myself to resolve upon what is agreeable to my corrupt nature, what strange kind of resolutions should I make? what should I resolve upon? certainly, only nothing but to gratify my carnal appetite with sensual and sinful pleasures, to indulge myself in riot and excess, to spend my time, and ravel out my parts and talents, in the ravels of sin and vanity. But now, *to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world*, to deny my own will, that I may fulfil the will of God; alas! such resolutions as these would never so much as come into my thoughts, much less would they discover themselves in my outward conversation.

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But, suppose I should be able to make good resolutions, and fulfil them exactly in my life and actions; yet, what should I do more than my duty? And what should I be esteemed of for doing that? Alas! this is so far from puffing me up, that I am verily persuaded, should I spend all my time, my parts, my strength, my gifts, for God, and all my estate upon the poor; should I water my couch continually with my tears, and fast my body into a skeleton; should I employ each moment of my life in the immediate worship of my glorious Creator; so that all my actions, from my birth to my death, should be but one continued act of holiness and obedience; in a word, should I live like an angel in heaven, and die like a saint on earth, yet I know no truer, nor should I desire any better epitaph to be engraven upon my tomb than this, "Here lies an unprofitable servant." No, no; it is Christ, and Christ alone that my soul must support itself upon. It is holiness, indeed, that is the way to heaven; but there is none; none but Christ can lead me to it. As the worst of my sins are pardonable by Christ, so are the best of my duties nothing worth without him.

But if so, then, whither tend my resolutions? Why so strict, so circumspect a conversation! Why, it is to justify that faith before others, and mine own conscience, which, I hope, through Christ, shall justify my soul before God. And I believe farther, that the holier I live here, the happier I shall live hereafter; for though I shall not be saved for my works, yet, I believe, I shall be saved according to them. And thus, as I dare not expect to be saved by the performance of my resolutions without Christ's merit, so neither do I ever expect to be enabled to perform my resolutions, without his spirit assisting me therein.

No: 'It is thyself, my God and my guide, that I wholly and solely depend upon! Oh! for thine

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own sake, for thy Son's sake, and for thy promise sake, do thou both make me to know what thou wouldst have me to do, and then help me to do what thou wouldst have me to know ! Teach me first what to resolve upon, and then enable me to perform my resolutions ; that I may walk with thee in the ways of holiness here, and rest with thee in the joys of happiness hereafter !'

Concerning my Conversation in general.

HAVING thus far determined in general to form resolutions for the better regulating of my life, I must now descend to particulars, and settle some rules with myself, to resolve my future life and conversation wholly into holiness and religion. I know, this is a hard task to do ; but I am sure, it is no more than what my God and my Father has set me ; why therefore should I think much to do it ? Shall I grudge to spend my life for him, who did not grudge to spend his own blood for me ! Shall not I so live, that he may be glorified here on earth, who died that I might be glorified in heaven ! especially considering, that if my whole life could be sublimated into holiness, and moulded into an exact conformity unto the will of the Most High, I should be happy beyond expression. Oh ! what a heaven should I then have on earth ! What ravishments of love and joy would my soul be continually possessed with ! Well ; I am resolved by the grace of God, to try ; and to that end, do, this morning, wholly sequester, and set myself apart for God, resolving, by the assistance of his grace, to make all and every thought, word, and action, to pay their tribute unto him. Let this man mind his profit ; a second, his pleasures ; a third, his honours ; a fourth himself, and all their sins ; I

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am resolved to mind and serve my God, so as to make him the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last of my whole life. And, that I may always have an exact copy before me, to write and frame every letter of this my life by;

RESOLUTION I.

I am resolved, by the Grace of God, to make Christ the Pattern of my Life here, that so Christ may be the Portion of my Soul hereafter.

LET the whole world go whither it will, I am resolved to walk in the steps that my Saviour went in before me: I shall endeavour in all places I come into, in all companies I converse with, in all the duties I undertake, in all the miseries I undergo, still to behave myself as my Saviour would do, was he in my place. So that wheresoever I am, or whatsoever I am about, I shall still put this question to myself, Would my Saviour go hither? Would he do this or that? And, every morning, consider with myself, suppose my Saviour was in my stead, had my business to do, how would he demean himself this day? How meek and lowly would he be in his carriage and deportment? How circumspect in his walking? How savoury in his discourse? How heavenly in all, even his earthly enjoyments? Well; and I am resolved, by strength from himself, to follow him as near as possible. I know, I can never hope perfectly to transcribe this copy, but I must endeavour to imitate it in the best manner I can, that so by doing as he did in time, I may be where he is to all eternity. But, alas! his life was spiritual, and I am carnal, sold under sin; and every petty object that doth but please my senses, will be apt to divert and draw away my soul from following his steps. In order, therefore, to prevent this,

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RESOLUTION II.

I am resolved, by the Grace of GOD, to walk by Faith, and not by Sight, on Earth, that so I may live by Sight, and not by Faith, in Heaven.

AND truly, this resolution is so necessary to the performance of all the rest, that without it I can do nothing, with it I can do every thing that is required. The reason why I am so much taken with the garnish and seeming beauty of this world's vanities, so as to step out of the road of holiness to catch at, or delight myself in them, is only because I look upon them with an eye of sense. For could I behold every thing with the eye of faith, I should judge of them, not as they seem to me, but as they are in themselves, *vanity and vexation of spirit*. For, faith has a quick and piercing eye, that can look through the outward superficies, into the inward essence of things. It can look through the pleasing bait to the hidden hook, view the sting as well as the honey, the everlasting punishment, as well as the temporal contentment there is in sin. It is, as the Apostle very well defines it, *the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen*, Heb. xi. 1. It is the substance of whatsoever is promised by God to me, or expected by me from him: So that, by faith, whatsoever I hope for in heaven, I may have the substance of upon earth: And it is the evidence of things not seen, the presence of what is absent, the clear demonstration of what would otherwise seem impossible; so that I can clearly discern, as through a prospective, hidden things, and things afar off, as if they were open, and just at hand; I can look into the deepest mysteries, as fully revealed, and see heaven and eternity as just ready to receive me.

And, Oh, could I but always look through this glass, and be constantly upon the mount, taking a

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view of the land of Canaan, what dreams and shadows would all things here below appear to be? Well, by the grace of God, I am resolved no longer to tie myself to sense and sight, the sordid and trifling affairs of this life, but always to walk as one of the other world; to behave myself in all places, and at all times, as one already possessed of my inheritance, and an inhabitant of the New Jerusalem; by faith assuring myself I have but a few more days to live below, a little more work to do; and then I shall lay aside my glass, and be admitted to a nearer vision and fruition of God, and see him face to face.

By this means, I shall always live, as if I was daily to die; always speak, as if my tongue, the next moment, were to cleave to the roof of my mouth; and continually order my thoughts and affections in such a manner, as if my soul were just ready to depart, and take its flight into the other world. By this means, whatsoever place I am in, or whatsoever work I am about, I shall still be with my God, and demean myself so, as if with St. Jerome, I heard the voice of the trumpet crying out, *Awake ye dead, and come to judgment!*

And thus, though I am at present here in the flesh, yet I shall look upon myself as more really an inhabitant of heaven, than I am upon earth. Here I am but as a pilgrim or a sojourner, that has no abiding city; but there I have a sure and everlasting inheritance, which Christ has purchased and prepared for me, and which faith has given me the possession of. And therefore, as it is my duty, so I will constantly make it my endeavour, to live up to the character of a true Christian, whose portion and conversation is in heaven, and think it a disgrace and disparagement to my profession, to stoop to, or entangle myself with such toys and trifles, as the men of the world busy themselves about; or to feed upon husks with swine here below, when it is

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in my power, by faith, to be continually supplied with spiritual manna from heaven, till at last I am admitted to it. And that I may awe my spirit into the performance of these, and all other my resolutions,

RESOLUTION III.

I am resolved, by the Grace of God, always to be looking upon God, as always looking upon me.

Wheresoever I am, or whatsoever I am doing, I must still consider the eye of the Great God, as directly intent upon me, viewing and observing all my thoughts, words and actions, and writing them down in the book of his remembrance; and that all my sins, unless they be washed out with the blood of my crucified Saviour, must still remain on record, and be brought in judgment against me at the great day. That therefore, I may always behave myself as in his presence, it behoves me thoroughly to consider, and be persuaded, not only that my outward man, but even also the secret thoughts, the inward motions and retirements of my soul, all the several windings and turnings of my heart, are exactly known and manifest, as anatomized before him. He knows what I am now a thinking, doing and writing, as well as I do myself; yea, he sees every word whilst it is in my heart, before it be brought forth and set down. He knows all the resolutions I have made, and how often, poor creature! I have broken them already, since I made them.

Upon this consideration, I resolve to stand my ground against all temptations, and whenever I find myself in danger to be drawn aside by them, to oppose the bent of my corrupt affections, by these or the like questions: Am I really in the presence of the Almighty, the great Lord of heaven and earth, and shall I presume to affront him to his face, by

doing such things as I know are odious and displeasing to him ? I would not commit adultery in the presence of my fellow-creatures, and shall I do it in the presence of the glorious Jehovah ? I would not steal in the sight of an earthly judge, and shall I do it before the Judge of all the world ? If fear and shame from men have such an influence upon me, as to deter me from the commission of sin, how ought I to be moved with the apprehensions of God's inspection, who does not only know my transgressions, but will eternally punish me for them.

May these thoughts and considerations always take place in my heart, and be accompanied with such happy effects in my conversation, that I may live with God upon earth, and so love and fear his presence in this world, that I may for ever enjoy his glory in the next !

Concerning my Thoughts.

BUT who am I, poor, proud, sinful dust and ashes, that I should expect to live so holy, so heavenly, as is here supposed ! Can grapes be gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles ? Can the fruit be sweet when the root is bitter ? Or the streams healthful, when the fountain is poisoned ? No, I must either get me a new and better heart, or else it will be impossible for me ever to lead a new and better life. But how must I come by this pearl of inestimable value, a new heart ? Can I purchase it with my own riches, or find it in my own field ? Can I raise it from sin to holiness, from earth to heaven, or from myself to God ? Alas ! I have endeavoured it ; but I find, by woful experience, I cannot attain to it : I have been lifting and heaving again and again, to raise it out of the mire and clay of sin, and corruption ; but, alas ! it will

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will not stir : I have rubbed and chafed it with one threatening after another, and all to get heat and life into it ; but still it is as cold and dead as ever : I have brought it to the promises, and set it under the droppings of the sanctuary ; I have shewn it the beauty of Christ, and the deformity of sin ; but yet it is a hard and sinful, an earthly and sensual heart still. What therefore shall I do with it ? O my God, I bring it unto thee ! Thou that madest it a heart at first, canst only make it a new heart now ! O do thou purify and refine it, and renew a right spirit within me ! Do thou take it into thy hands, and, out of thine infinite goodness, new-mould it up, by thine own grace, into an exact conformity to thine own will ! Do thou but give me a new heart, and I shall promise thee, by thy grace, to lead a new life, and become a new creature ! Do thou but clear the fountain, and I shall endeavour to look to the streams that flow from it ! which that I may be able to do, with the better success,

RESOLUTION I.

I am resolved, by the Grace of GOD, to watch as much over the inward Motions of my Heart, as the outward Actions of my Life.

FOR, my heart, I perceive, is the womb, in which all sin is first conceived, and from which, my Saviour tells me, *proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness*, Mark. vii. 21, 22. So that, as ever I would prevent the commission of these sins in my life, I must endeavour to hinder their conception in my heart, following the wise man's counsel, *to keep my heart with all diligence, because out of it are the issues of life*, Prov. iv. 23. Neither is this the only reason, why I should set so strict a watch over my

heart, because sinful thoughts lead to sinful acts; but because the thoughts themselves are sinful, yea, the very first-born of iniquity; which thought man cannot pry into or discover, yet the all-seeing God knows and observes, and remembers them, as well as the greatest actions of all my life. And, Oh! what wicked and prophane thoughts have I formerly entertained, not only against God, but against Christ, by questioning the justice of his laws, and doubting of the truth of his revelation, so as to make both his life and death of none effect to me! Which, that they may never be laid to my charge hereafter, I humbly beseech God to pardon, and absolve me from them, and to give me grace, for the remainder of my life, to be as careful of thinking, as of doing well, and as fearful of offending him in my heart, as of transgressing his laws in my life and conversation. To this end,

RESOLUTION II.

I am resolved, by the Grace of GOD, to stop every thought at its first entring into my heart, and to examine it whence it comes, and whither it tends.

SO soon as ever any new thought begins to bubble in my soul, I am resolved to examine what stamp it is of, whether it spring from the pure fountain of living waters, or the polluted streams of my own affections; as also, which way it tends, or takes its course, towards the ocean of happiness, or the pit of destruction. And the reason of this my resolution, I draw from the experience I have had of the devil's temptations, and the working of my own corruptions; by which I find, that there is no sin I am betrayed into but what takes its rise from my inward thoughts. These are the tempters that first present some pleasing object to my view, and then bias my understanding, and persuade my will to comply with the suggestion. So that,

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that, though the spirit of God is pleased to dart a beam into my heart at the same time, and shew me the odious and dangerous effects of such thoughts; yet, I know not how or why, I find a prevailing suggestion within, that tells me it is but a thought, and that so long as it goes no farther, it cannot do me much hurt. Under this specious colour and pretence, I secretly persuade myself to dwell a little longer upon it; and finding my heart pleased and delighted with its natural issue, I give it a little farther indulgence, till, at last, my desire breaks out into a flame, and will be satisfied with nothing less than the enjoyment of the object it is exercised upon. And what water can quench such a raging fire, as is thus kindled by the devil, and blown up by the bellows of my own inordinate affections, which the more I think of, the more I increase the flame? How nearly therefore, does it concern me to take up this resolution, of setting a constant watch and guard at the door of my heart, that nothing may enter in, without a strict examination? Not as if I could examine every particular thought that arises in my heart, for by that means I should do nothing else but examine my thoughts without intermission. But this I must do: Whenever I find any thought that bears the face or appearance of sin, I must throw it aside with the utmost abhorrence. And when it comes in disguise, as the devil under Samuel's mantle, or when it is a thought I never conceived before, and know not but it may be bad, as well as good; then, before I suffer it to settle upon my spirits, I must examine, as well as I can, whether it be sent from heaven or hell, and what message it comes about, and what will be the issue of it. And thus, by the Divine assistance, I shall let nothing into my heart, but what will bring me nearer to my God, and set me at a greater distance from the evil and punishment of sin. Neither do I think it my duty only to be watchful

watchful against such thoughts as are in themselves sinful: but,

RESOLUTION III.

I am resolved, by the Grace of GOD, to be as fearful to let in vain, as careful to keep out sinful thoughts.

I Do not look upon vain thoughts as only tending to sin, but as in themselves sinful; for that which makes sin to be sin, is the want of conformity to the will of God; and that vain thoughts are not conformable and agreeable to the divine will, appears, in that God himself, by the mouth of his royal prophet, expressly saith, *I hate vain thoughts*, Psal. cxix. 113. Again, vain thoughts are therefore sinful, because they have in them nothing that can denominate them good: For, as in a moral sense, there is never a particular individual act, so neither is there any particular thought, but what is either good or bad in some respect or other. There is not a moment of my life, but it is my duty either to be thinking, or speaking, or doing good: So that, whensoever I am not thus employed, I come short of my duty, and by consequence, am guilty of sin.

But what are these vain thoughts I am thus resolving against? Why all wanderings and distraction, in prayer, or hearing the word of God; all uselefs, trifling and impertinent thoughts, that do not belong to, nor further the work I am about, the grand affair of my salvation; may properly be called vain thoughts. And alas! What swarms of these are continually crowding into my heart? How have I thought away whole hours together, about I know not what chimeras, whereof one scarce ever depends upon another: Sometimes entertaining myself with the pleasure of sense, as eating and drinking, and such-like earthly enjoyments; sometimes

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CHRISTIAN RESOLUTIONS.

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sometimes building castles in the air, and clambering up to the pinnacle of wealth and honour, which I am not half way got up to, but down I fall again into the fool's paradise?

Or, if I chance, at any time, to think a good while upon one thing, it is just to as much purpose as the man's thoughts were, which I have sometimes heard of, and smiled at, who having an egg in his hand, by a sort of chimerical climax, improved it into an estate: But while he was thus pleasing himself with these imaginary products, down drops the egg, and all his hens, and cattle, and house, and lands, that he had raised from it, vanished in the fall. These, and such like, are vain thoughts, that I must, for the future, endeavour to avoid; and though it will be impossible for me wholly to prevent their first entering into my mind, yet I resolve, by the grace of God, not to harbour or dwell upon, or delight myself with them. And then notwithstanding they are, in some sense, sinful, yet they will not be imputed to me as such, provided I use my utmost endeavours to avoid them. Which that I may be the better able to do,

RESOLUTION IV.

I am resolved, by the Grace of GOD, to be always exercising my Thoughts upon good Objects, that the Devil may not exercise them upon bad.

THE soul being a spiritual substance, is always in action, and its proper and immediate act is thinking, which is as natural and proper to the soul, as extension is to the body: It is that upon which all the other actings of the soul are grounded; so that neither our apprehensions of, nor affections to, any object can be acted without it. And hence it is, that I think the soul is very properly defined, *Substantia cogitans*, a thinking substance;

stance ; for there is nothing else but a spirit can think, and there is no spirit but always doth think. And this I find by experience, to be so true and certain, that if, at any time, I have endeavoured to think nothing (as I have oftentimes done) I have spent all the time in thinking upon that very thought.

How much, therefore, doth it concern me to keep my soul in continual exercise upon what is good ; for to be sure if I do not set it on work, the devil will ; and if it do not work for God, it will work for him ; I know sinful objects are more agreeable to a sinful soul ; but I am sure, holy thoughts are more conformable to a holy God. Why, therefore, should I spend and ravel out my thoughts upon that which will destroy my soul ? No, no ; I shall henceforth endeavour always to be employing my thoughts upon something that is good ; and, therefore, to have good subjects constantly at hand to think upon, as the attributes of God, the glory of heaven, the misery of hell, the merits of CHRIST, the corruption of my nature, the sinfulness of sin, the beauty of holiness, the vanity of the world, the immortality of the soul, and the like ; and likewise to take occasion, from the objects I meet or converse with in the world, to make such remarks and reflections, as may be for my advantage or improvement in my spiritual affairs. For, there is nothing in the world, though it be never so bad, but that I may exercise good thoughts upon : And my neglect in this kind, has been the real occasion of all these vain thoughts that have hitherto possessed my soul. I have not kept them close to their work, to think upon what is good ; and therefore, they have run out into those extravagancies, which, by the blessing of God, in the performance of these resolutions, I shall endeavour to avoid.

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It is, indeed, a singular advantage of that high and heavenly calling, in which the Most High, of his wisdom and goodness, has been pleased to place me, that all the objects we converse with, and all the subjects we exercise our thoughts upon, are either God or heaven, or something relating to them. So that we need not go out of our common road to meet with this heavenly company, good thoughts. But then, I do not account every thought of God, or heaven, which only swims in my brain, to be a good and holy thought, unless it sinks down into my heart and affections; *i. e.* unless to my meditations of God, and another world, I join a longing for him, a rejoicing in him, and solacing myself in the hopes of a future enjoyment of him. Neither will this be any hinderance, but a furtherance to my studies; for, as I know no divine truths as I ought, unless I know them practically and experimentally; so I never think I have any clear apprehensions of God, till I find my affections are inflamed towards him; or that ever I understand any divine truth aright, till my heart be brought into subjection to it.

This resolution, therefore, extends itself, not only to the subject matter of my thoughts, but also to the quality of them, with regard to practice, that they may influence my life and conversation, that whether I speak or write, or eat, or drink, or whatsoever I do, I may still season all, even my commonest actions with heavenly meditations; there being nothing I can set my hand to, but I may likewise set my heart a working upon it. Which accordingly I shall endeavour, by the blessing of God, to do. And, for the better ordering of my thoughts,

R E.

RESOLUTION V.

I am resolved, by the Grace of GOD, so to marshal my Thoughts, that they may not juggle out one another, nor any of them prejudice the Bnsiness I am about.

MY soul being by nature swift and nimble, and by corruption inordinate and irregular in its operations, I can never set myself to think upon one thing, but presently another presses in, and another after that, and so on, till by thinking of so many things, at once, I can think upon nothing to any purpose. And hence it is, that I throw away thousands of thoughts each day for nothing, which, if well managed, might prove very profitable and advantageous to me. To prevent, therefore, this tumultuous, desultory, and useless working of my thoughts, as I have already resolved to fix my heart upon necessary, and useful, and good objects, so to prevent my thoughts rolling from one thing to another, or leaping from the top of one to the height of another object, I must now endeavour to rank, and digest them into order and method, that they may, for the future, be more steady and regular in their pursuits. I know, the devil and my own corrupt nature will labour to break the ranks, and confound the order of them; what stratagem therefore, shall I use, to prevent this confusion? I shall endeavour, by the grace of God, whensoever I find any idle thoughts begin to frisk and rove out of the way, to call them in again, and set them to work upon one or other of those objects before mentioned, and to keep them, for some time, fixed and intent upon it; and considering the relations and dependencies of one thing upon another, not to suffer any foreign ideas, such, I mean, as are impertinent to the chain of thoughts I am upon, to juggle them out, or to divert my mind another way.

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way. No, not though they be otherwise good thoughts; for thoughts in themselves good, when they croud in unseasonably, are sometimes attended with very ill effects, by interrupting and preventing some good purposes and resolutions which might prove more effectual for promoting God's glory, the good of others, and the comfort of our own souls.

These, and such like, are the methods by which I design and resolve to regulate my thoughts: And since I can do nothing without the divine assistance, I earnestly beg of God to give me such a measure of his grace, as may enable me effectually to put these resolutions in practice, that I may not think and resolve in vain.

Concerning my Affections.

BUT whilst I am thus ranging my thoughts, I find something of a passion or inclination within me, either drawing me to, or driving me from, every thing I think on; so that I cannot so much as think upon a thought, but it is either pleasing or displeasing to me, according to the agreeableness or disagreeableness of the object it is placed upon, or to my natural affections. If it comes under the pleasing dress and appearance of good, I readily chuse and embrace it; if otherwise, I am as eagerly bent to refuse and reject it. And these two acts of the will are naturally founded in those two reigning passions of the soul, love and hatred, which I cannot but look upon as the grounds of all its other motions and affections. For what are those other passions of desire, hope, joy, and the like, but love in all its several postures? and what else can we conceive of fear, grief, abhorrence,

horrence, &c. but so many different expressions of hatred, according to the several circumstances that the displeasing object appears to be under. Doth my understanding represent any thing to my will, under the notion of good and pleasant? My will is presently taken and delighted with it, and so places its love upon it; and this love, if the object be present, inclines me to embrace it with joy; if absent, it puts forth itself into desire; if easy to be attained, it comforts itself with hope; if difficult, it arms itself with courage; if impossible, it boils up into anger; if obstructed, it presently falls down into despair.

On the other hand, Doth my understanding represent any object to my will, as evil, painful, or deformed? How doth it immediately shrink and gather up itself into a loathing and hatred of it! and this hatred, if the ungrateful object be present, puts on the mournful fables of grief and sorrow: If it be at any distance from it, it boils up into detestation and abhorrence: If ready to fall upon it, it shakes for fear; if difficult to be prevented, it strengthens itself with courage and magnanimity, either to conquer or undergo it. These affections, therefore, being thus the constant attendants of my thoughts, it behoves me as much to look to those, as to the other; especially, when I consider, that not only my thoughts, but even my actions too, are generally determined to good or bad, accordingly as they are influenced by them. That my affections, therefore, as well as my thoughts, may be duly regulated,

R E.

RESOLUTION I.

I am resolved, by the Grace of GOD, always to make my Affections subservient to the Dictates of my Understanding, that my Reason may not follow, but guide my Affections.

THE affections, being of themselves blind and inordinate, unless they are directed by reason and judgement, they either move toward a wrong object, or pursue the right a wrong way. And this judgement must be mature and deliberate, such as arises from a clear apprehension of the nature of the object that affects me, and a thorough consideration of the several circumstances that attend it. And great care must be taken, that I do not impose on myself by fancy and imagination, that I do not mistake fancy for judgement, or the capricious humours of my roving imagination, for the solid dictates of a well-guided reason. For my fancy is as wild as my affections: And, if the blind lead the blind, they will both fall into the ditch.

And alas! how oft am I deceived in this manner! If I do but fancy a thing good and lovely, how eager are my affections in the pursuit of it? If I do but fancy any thing evil and hurtful to me, how doth my heart presently rise up against it, or grieve and sorrow for it? And this I believe, hath been the occasion of all the enormities and extravagancies I have been guilty of, through the whole course of my past life, divesting me of my reasonable faculties, as to the acts and exercises of them, and subjecting my soul to the powers of sense, that I could not raise my affections above them. Thus, for instance, I have not loved grace, because my fancy could not see its beauty; I have not loathed sin, because my fancy could not comprehend its misery; and I have not truly desired heaven because my fancy could not reach its glory: Whereas

if the transient beauty and lustre of this world's vanities was but presented to my view, how has my fancy mounted up to the highest pitch of pleasure and ambition, and inflamed my heart with the desire of them?

And thus, poor wretch, have I been carried about with the powerful charms of sense, without having any other guide of my affections, but what is common to the very brutes that perish: Fancy supplying that place in the sensitive, which reason does in the rational soul. And, alas! What is this, but with Nebuchadnezzar, to leave communion with men, and herd myself with the beasts of the field? And what a shame and reproach is this to the image of God, in which I was created!

Oh! Thou, that art the author of my nature, help me, I beseech thee, to act more conformably to it, for the time to come; that I may no longer be bewildered or misled by the blind conduct of my straggling fancy; this *ignis fatuus*, that hurries me over bogs and precipices to the pit of destruction; but that I may bring all my affections and actions to the standard of a sound and clear judgement; and let that judgement be guided by the unerring light of thy Divine word; that so I may neither love, desire, fear, nor detest any thing, but what my judgement, thus formed, tells me I ought to do!

I know it will be very hard thus to subject my affections to the dictates and commands of my judgement: But howsoever, it is my resolution, this morning, in the presence of Almighty God, to endeavour it, and never to suffer my heart to settle its affection upon any object, till my judgement hath passed its sentence upon it. And, as I will not suffer my affections to run before my judgement; so, whenever that is determined, I steadfastly resolve to follow it; that so my apprehensions and affections always going together, I may be sure

o walk in the direct path of God's commandments, and enter the gate that leads to everlasting life. And, the better to facilitate the performance of this general resolution, it being necessary to descend to particulars ;

RESOLUTION II.

I am resolved, by the Grace of GOD, to love God, as the best of Goods, and to hate Sin, as the worst of Evils.

AS God is the centre of our concupiscible affections, so sin is the object of those we call *irascible* ; and the affections of love and hatred being the ground of all the rest, I must have a great care, that I do not mistake or miscarry in them : For if these be placed upon wrong objects, it is impossible any of the rest should be placed upon right ones. In order, therefore, to prevent such a miscarriage, as God is the greatest good, and sin the greatest evil, I resolve to love God, above all things else in the world, and to hate sin to the same degree ; and so to love other things, only in relation to God, and to hate nothing, but in reference to sin.

As for the first, the loving God above all things, there is nothing seems more reasonable, inasmuch as there is nothing lovely in any creature, but what it receives from God ; and by how much the more it is like to God, by so much the more it is lovely unto us. Hence it is that beauty, or an exact symmetry and proportion of parts and colours, so attracts our love, because it so much resembles God, who is beauty and perfection itself. And hence it is likewise, that grace is the most lovely thing in the world, next to God, as being the image of God himself stamped upon the soul ; nay, it is not only the image and representation, but it is the influence and communication of himself to us ; so that the more we have of grace, we may safely say, so much

the more we have of God within us. Why, therefore, should I grudge my love to him, who only deserves it? who is not only infinitely lovely in himself, but the author and perfection of all loveliness in his creatures? why, the true reason is, that my affections have run a-gadding without my judgement, or else my judgement hath been baulked or anticipated by my fancy; whereas, now, that my apprehensions of God are a little cleared up, and my judgement leads the way, though no body sees me, yet methinks I cannot but blush at myself, that I should ever lie doating upon these dreams and shadows here below, and not fix my affections upon the infinite beauty and all-sufficiency of God above, who deserves my love and admiration so infinitely beyond them. However, therefore, I have heretofore placed my affections upon other things above God, I am now resolved to love God, not only above many, or most things, but above all things else in the world.

And here, by loving God I do not understand that sensitive affection I place upon material objects; for it is impossible, that that should be fixed upon God, who is a pure spiritual Being; but that, as by the deliberate choice of my will, I take him for my chiefest good, so I ought to prefer him as such, before my nearest and dearest possessions, interests, or relations, and whatsoever else may at any time stand in competition with him.

And thus, as I shall endeavour to love God, so likewise to hate sin, above all things: And this is as necessary as the former; for all things have something of good in them, as they are made by God; but sin being, in its own nature, a privation of good, and directly opposite to the nature, and will of God, (as I have before shewed) it has nothing of beauty or amiableness to recommend it to my affections. On the contrary, it is a compound of deformity and defilement, that is always
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attended with punishment and misery ; and must, therefore, be the object of my hatred and abhorrence, wheresoever I find it. For, as God is the centre of all that is good, so is sin the fountain of all the evil in the world. All the strife and contention, ignominy and disgrace, misfortunes and afflictions that I observe in the world ; all the diseases of my body, and infirmities of my mind ; all the errors of my understanding, and irregularities of my will and affections ; in a word, all the evils whatsoever, that I am affected with, or subject to, in this world, are still the fruits and effects of sin : For if man had never offended the chiefest good, he had never been subject to this train of evils which attended his transgression. Whensoever, therefore, I find myself begin to detest and abhor any evil, I shall, for the future, endeavour to turn my eyes to the spring-head, and loath and detest the fountain that sends forth all those bitter and unwholesome streams, as well as the channels of those corrupt hearts in which they flow. And for this reason, I resolve to hate sin wheresoever I find it, whether in myself or in others, in the best of friends, as well as the worst of enemies. Love, I know, and charity, covers a multitude of sins, and where we love the man, we are all of us but too apt to overlook, or excuse his faults. For the prevention of this, therefore, I firmly resolve, in all my expressions of love to my fellow-creatures, so to love the person, as yet to hate his sins ; and so to hate his sins, as yet to love his person. The last of which, I hope, I shall not find hard to practise, my nature, by the blessing of God, being not easily inclined to hate any man's person whatsoever : And the former will not be much more difficult, when I consider, that by how much more I love my friend, by so much more should I hate whatsoever will be offensive or destructive to him.

Having

Having thus fixed my resolutions, with regard to those two commanding passions of my soul, love and hatred;

RESOLUTION III.

I am resolved, by the assistance of Divine Grace, to make GOD the principal Object of my Joy, and Sin the principal Object of my Grief and Sorrow: So as to grieve for Sin more than Suffering, and for Suffering only for Sin's Sake.

THE affections of joy and grief are the immediate issues of love and hatred; and, therefore, not at all to be separated in their object. Having therefore, resolved to love, I cannot but resolve likewise to rejoice in God above all things: For the same measure of love I have towards any thing, the same measure of complacency and delight I must necessarily have in the enjoyment of it. As, therefore, I love God above all things, and other things only in subserviency to him, so much I rejoice, in God above all things, and in other things only as coming from him. I know, I not only may, but must rejoice, in the mercies and blessings that God confers upon me; but it is still my duty to rejoice more in what God is in himself, than in what he is pleased to communicate to me: So that I am not only bound to rejoice in God, when I have nothing else, but when I have all things else to rejoice in. Let therefore my riches, honours, or my friends fail me: Let my pleasures, my health and hope, and all fail me; I am still resolved by his grace, to *rejoice in the Lord, and to joy in the God of my salvation.* On the other hand, let honour or riches be multiplied upon me; let joy and pleasure, and all that a carnal heart (like mine) can wish for or desire, be thrown upon me; yet am I still resolved, that as it is my business to

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serve God, so shall it be my delight and comfort to rejoice in him.

And, as God shall thus be my chiefest joy, so shall sin be my greatest grief; for I account no condition miserable, but that which results from, or leads me unto sin: So that when any thing befalls me, which may bear the face of suffering, and fill my heart with sorrow, I shall still endeavour to keep off the smart, till I know from whence it comes. If sin has kindled the fire of God's wrath against me, and brought these judgements upon me, Oh! what a heavy load shall I then feel upon my soul! and how shall I groan and complain under the burden of it! But if there be nothing of the poison of sin dropt into this cup of sorrows, though it may perhaps prove bitter to my senses, yet it will, in the end, prove healthful to my soul; as being not kindled at the furnace of God's wrath, but at the flames of his love and affection for me. So that I am so far from having cause to be sorry for the sufferings he brings upon me, that I have much greater cause to rejoice in them, as being an argument of the love and affection he bears to me: *For whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth, Heb. xii. 6.*

And having thus resolved to rejoice in nothing but God, and grieve for nothing but sin, I must not be cast down and dejected at every providence which the men here below count a loss or affliction; for, certainly, all the misery I find in any thing extrinsecal, is created by myself; nothing but what is in me, being properly an affliction to me; so that it is my fancy that is the ground of misery in all things without myself. If I did not fancy some evil or misery in the loss of such an enjoyment, it would be no misery at all to me; because I am still the same as I was, and have still as much as I had before.

before. For it is God that is the portion of my soul; and, therefore, should I lose every thing I have in the world besides, yet having God, I cannot be said to lose any thing, because I have him that hath, and is, all things in himself. Whensoever, therefore, any thing befalls me, that use to be matter of sorrow and dejection to me, I must not presently be affected with or dejected at it, but still behave myself like an heir of heaven, and living above the smiles and frowns of this world, account nothing matter of joy, but so far as I enjoy of God's love; nor any thing matter of sorrow, but so much as I see of his anger in it.

RESOLUTION IV.

I am resolved, by the Grace of GOD, to desire Spiritual Mercies more than Temporal, and Temporal Mercies only in reference to Spiritual.

HAVING rectified the balance of my judgement according to the scripture; when I would begin to weigh temporal things with spiritual, I find there is no proportion, and so no comparison to be made betwixt them. And will any wise man, then, that pretends to reason, be at a stand which of these to chuse, which to esteem the best, or desire most? Alas! what is there in the world, that can fill the vast desires of my soul, but only he, who is infinitely above me and my desires too? Will riches do it? No, I may as soon undertake to fill my barns with grace, as my heart with gold, and as easily stuff my bags with virtue, as ever satisfy my desires with wealth. Do I hunt after pleasures? These may, indeed, charm and delight my brutish senses, but can never be agreeable, or proportionate to my spiritual faculties. Do I grasp at honour and popularity? These, again, are as empty and unsatisfying as the former; they may make me look high

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and great in the eye of the world, turn my head giddy with applause, or puff up my heart with pride, but they can never fill up the measure of its desires. And thus, if I should have the whole world at command, and could, with Alexander, wield both sword and sceptre over all the nations and languages of it, would this content me? or rather, should I not sit down, and weep with him, that I had not another world to conquer and possess? Whereas, God being an infinite good, it is impossible for me to desire any thing, which I may not enjoy in him and his mercies: Let me, or any other creature, extend our desires never so far, still the graces and blessings of this infinite God will be infinitely beyond them all: Insomuch that though ten thousand worlds are not able to satisfy one soul, yet, one God is able to satisfy ten thousand souls; yea, and ten millions more to them, as well as if there was only one soul in all the world to satisfy.

Come, therefore, my dear Lord and Saviour! whilst thy servant is breathing after thee; and possess my heart with the spiritual blessings of grace and faith, peace and charity; and let none of these empty and transient delights of this world stand in competition with them! Thou art the source and centre of all my wishes and desires: *Even as the hart panteth after the water-brook, so panteth my soul after thee, O God! When shall I appear in thy presence?* When, when shall that blessed time come, that I shall see thy sacred majesty, face to face? This is a mercy, I confess, which I cannot expect, whilst imprisoned in the body; but, howsoever, though I must not yet appear before thee, do thou vouchsafe to appear in me, and give me such glimpses of thy love and graces here, as may be an earnest of the bliss and glory I am to enjoy hereafter.

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RESOLUTION V.

I am resolved, by the Grace of G O D, to hope for nothing so much as the Promises, and to fear nothing so much as the Threatenings of G O D.

MY soul being inflamed with holy desires after God, my heart cannot but be big with the hopes and expectations of him : And, truly, as there is nothing that I can absolutely desire, so neither is there any thing that I can assuredly hope for and depend upon, but God himself, and the promises he has made to me in his divine word. For, as all things derive their being and subsistence from him, so they are all at his beck and command, and are acted and influenced as his wisdom and pleasure sees fit to order them. All the secondary causes are in his hand, and he turns them which way soever he will ; so that, howsoever improbable and disproportionate the means he uses may appear to be, he never fails to accomplish the end, or whatever he wills or decrees to be done. And, therefore, wherever I meet with any promises made over to the faithful in his sacred word (since they are the promises of One who is infinitely just and true, who can neither dissemble, nor deceive) I cannot in the least doubt but they will be punctually fulfilled ; and if I am of that happy number (as I trust through the merits and grace of CHRIST, I shall approve myself to be) I have as much assurance of being partaker of them, as if I had them actually in possession, or as any of the faithful servants of God, who have already experienced the accomplishment of them.

But suppose God should not favour me with the bright part of his promises, but, instead of the blessings of health and prosperity, should visit me with crosses and afflictions ; yet I have still the same grounds for my hope and confidence in him, and may say with the Psalmist, *The Lord is my helper, I*

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will not fear what the devil or man can do unto me. For, though their spite and malice may sometimes cross, torment, afflict, and persecute me; yet, since I am assured, they are only as instruments in the hand of God, that cannot go beyond their commission, nor make me suffer more than I am able to bear, I may comfort myself, under all these afflictions, by the same divine promise that St. Paul had recourse to, on the like occasion, *viz. That all shall work together for good, to them that love GOD, who are the called according to his purpose,* Rom. viii. 28. The devil could not touch the possessions of Job, till he had received a commission from God; nor could he come near his body till that commission was renewed; and so, neither can he, nor any creature whatsoever, throw any evil upon me, without the Divine permission; and even that, though it seems to be evil, shall really, in the end, turn to my benefit and advantage. Oh! what a sovereign antidote is this against all despondency and despair, even under the deepest and severest trials? Permit me, O my God, to apply this sacred promise to myself, and say, I am assured of it by my own experience. For I can hardly remember any one thing that ever happened to me, in the whole course of my life, even to the crossing of my most earnest desires, and highest expectations, but what I must confess, to the praise of thy grace and goodness, has really, in the end, turned to my advantage another way: Oh! make me truly sensible of all thy promises to, and dealings with me, that whatever storms and surges may arise in the tempestuous ocean of this transient world, I may still fix the anchor of my hope and happiness in thee, who art the source and spring of all blessings, and without whom no evil or calamity could ever befall me!

And as the promises of God, upon all these accounts, are to be the object of my hope; so are his
D threatnings

threatnings to be of my fear and averſion ; as the former are of excellent uſe to raiſe and revive the moſt drooping hearts, ſo the latter are of weight enough to ſink and depreſs the ſtoutest and moſt undaunted ſpirits, and make them lick up the duſt of horſour and deſpair. Not to mention any thing of the exquisite and eternal miſeries denounced againſt the wicked in the next world, with which the Scriptures every where abound, there is one puniſhment threatened to be inflicted here, which is, of itſelf, ſufficient to do this ; and that is, in Mal. ii. 2. *If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory to my name, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts, I will even ſend a curſe upon you, and I will curſe your bleſſings.* Moſt dreadful ſentence ! which none that conſider aright, can be able to read, without trembling and aſtoniſhment. Alas ! if God ſhould curſe me, where ſhould I ſeek for bleſſing, ſince he is the only fountain from which it flows, and by which it is conveyed and communicated to me ? And if he ſhould curſe my very bleſſings, what could I hope for, but miſery and deſpair ? My health, my wealth, my preferments, my relations, nay, my very life itſelf, would all be accuſed to me ; and, what is yet worſe, even my ſpiritual exerciſes and performances, my preaching, praying, and communicating, would all become a ſnare and a curſe to me ; Yea, and CHRIST himſelf, who came into the world to bleſs and redeem me, if I walk not in his fear, believe not his goſpel, or give not glory to his name, will himſelf be a curſe and condemnation to me. So that I may ſay of every thing I have, or enjoy, or expect, All theſe God hath made curſes to me, becauſe I have not bleſſed and glorified him in them. Oh ! who would not tremble and be wrought upon by theſe threatnings ? Who would not fear thee, O King of Nations, who art thus terrible in thy judgements ? Who would not love and obey thee,

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who art so gracious in thy promises? Teach me, I beseech thee, so to place my fear upon the former, that I may still fix my hope upon the latter, that though I fear thy dreadful curses, yet I may never despair of thy tender mercies!

R E S O L U T I O N VI.

I am resolved, by the Grace of GOD, to arm myself with that spiritual Courage and Magnanimity, as to press through all Duties and Difficulties whatsoever, for the advancement of GOD's Glory, and my own Happiness.

CHRISTIANITY is well termed a warfare, for a warfare it is, wherein no danger can be prevented, no enemy conquered, no victory obtained, without much courage and resolution. I have not only many outward enemies to grapple with, but I have myself, my worst enemy to encounter and subdue. As for those enemies which are not near me, by the assistance of God's Spirit, I can make pretty good shift to keep them at the sword's point: But this enemy, that is gotten within me, has so often foiled and disarmed me, that I have reason to say, as David did of his enemies, it is too strong for me! And, as he said of the chief of his, *I shall one day fall by the hands of Saul*: So have I too much occasion to say, I shall fall by myself, as being myself the greatest enemy to my own spiritual interest and concerns. How necessary is it then, that I should raise and muster up all my force and courage, put on my spiritual armour, and make myself strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might? I know I must strive, before I can enter in at the strait gate; I must win the crown, before I can wear it, and be a member of the Church Militant, before I can be admitted into the Church Triumphant. In a word, I must go through a solitary wilderness, and conquer many enemies, be-

fore I come to the land of Canaan ; or else I must never be possessed of it. What then ? Shall I lose my glory, to balk my duty ? Shall I let go my glorious and eternal possession, to save myself from a seeming hardship, which the devil would persuade me to be a trouble and affliction ? Alas ! if CHRIST had laid aside the great work of my redemption, to avoid the undergoing of GOD's anger and man's malice, what a miserable condition had I been in ? And, therefore, whatever taunts and reproaches I meet with, from the presumptuous and profane, the infidel and atheistical reprobates of the age ; let them laugh at my profession, or mock at what they are pleased to call preciseness ; let them defraud me of my just rights, or traduce and bereave me of my good name and reputation ; let them vent the utmost of their poisonous malice and envy against me ; I have this comfortable reflection still to support me, That if I suffer all this for CHRIST's sake, it is in the cause of one who suffered a thousand times more for mine ; and, therefore, it ought to be matter of joy and triumph, rather than of grief and dejection to me : Especially, considering, that these my light afflictions, which are but for a moment, will work out for me a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Upon the prospect of which, I firmly resolve, notwithstanding the growing strength of sin, and the overbearing prevalency of my own corrupt affections, to undertake all duties, and undergo all miseries, that God, in his infinite wisdom, thinks fit to lay upon me, or exercise my patience in.

R E S O L U T I O N VII.

I am resolved, by the Grace of GOD, so to be angry, as not to sin ; and, therefore, to be angry at nothing but Sin.

THE former part of the Resolution is founded on the express command of St. Paul, *Be ye angry,*

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Now, as nothing can deserve my anger, but what is disagreeable to my nature, and offensive to the author of it, so nothing but sin can properly be called its object. The chief thing that I am to aim at in my actions, is the honouring, serving, and pleasing of God; and how can I serve and please God, in being angry at any thing but what I know is displeasing to him? I may be scorned, reproached, and vilified among my equals, or accused, condemned, and punished by my superiours; and these are treatments that are but too apt to raise and transport men into anger and revenge: But then, before I suffer this passion to boil up in me, I ought to consider whether I have not behaved myself so as to deserve this sort of treatment; if I have, then there is no injury or injustice done me thereby, and, therefore, I ought not to be angry at it: If I have not, I must not be angry at the persons who act thus falsely and unjustly against me, but only at their sin; for, to speak properly, it is not the person that offends me, but the sin. And this, not because it is injurious to me, but because it is offensive and displeasing to God Himself; for to be angry at any thing but what displeases God, is to displease God in being angry. Whenever, therefore, I receive any affronts or provocations of this nature, I am resolved, by God's grace assisting my endeavours, never to be moved or troubled at them, farther than they are in their own nature sinful.

sinful, and at the same time abstracting the sin from the persons, to pray for the pardon of those that are guilty of it; and not only so, but, according to the command and example of my Saviour, even to love them too.

But, how shall I be sure to be angry at nothing but sin, and so not to sin in my anger, when every petty trifle or cross accident, is so apt to raise this passion in me? Why, the best method I can take, is, that which the wise man directs me to, *not to be hasty in my spirit*, Eccles. vii. 9. but to *defer my anger according to discretion*, Prov. xix. 11. So that, whensoever any thing happens, that may incense and inflame my passion, I must immediately stop its career, and suspend the acts of it, till I have duly considered the motives and occasions that raised it. And as this will be a very good means to regulate the object of my anger, so likewise the measure of it: For, he that is slow to wrath takes time to consider, and, by consequence, puts his passion under the conduct of his reason; and, whoever does so, it will never suffer it to be transported beyond its proper bounds: Whereas, he whose anger is like tinder, that catches as soon as the spark is upon it, and who uses no means to stop its spreading, is presently blown up into a furious flame, which, before it is extinguished, may do more mischief than he is ever able to repair; for, no man knows, whither his anger may hurry him, when once it has got the mastery of him. In order, therefore, to prevent the fatal consequences of this passion, I now resolve never to speak or do any thing, while I am under the influence of it, but take time to consider with myself, and reflect upon the several circumstances of the action or object it arises from, as well as the occasion and tendency of it; and, as oft as I find any thing in it displeasing to God, to be regularly angry at that, to correct, rebuke, and reprove it, with a zeal and fervour of spirit,

spirit, suitable to the occasion; but, still to keep within the bounds of the truly Christian temper, which is always distinguished by love and charity, and exercises itself in meekness and moderation. And, Oh! what a sedate and contented spirit will this resolution breed in me! How easy and quiet shall I be under all circumstances? Whilst others are peevish and fretful, and torment themselves with every petty trifle that does but cross their inclinations, or seem to be injurious to them; or fall into the other extreme, of a stoical apathy or insensibility; I shall, by this resolution, maintain a medium betwixt both, and possess my soul in peace and patience.

Concerning my WORDS.

HAVING thus far cleansed the fountain of my heart, with regard to my thoughts and affections, which are the immediate issues of my active soul, the next thing incumbent upon me, is, to regulate my outward conversation, both with respect to my words and actions. As to the first, the holy scripture assures me, that *the tongue is a world of iniquity*, James iii. 6. And again, that it is *an unruly evil, which no man can tame*, ver. 8. But is it, indeed, so unruly? Then there is the more occasion to have it governed and subdued; and, since that is not to be done by man alone, it is still more necessary, that I should call in the assistance of that Divine Spirit that gives this character of it, first to fix my resolutions, and then to strengthen me in the performance of them. I stedfastly purpose to imitate the Royal Psalmist, in this particular, and to take heed to my ways, that I offend not with my tongue, Psal. xxxix. 1. Yea, I am resolved with holy Job, that *all the while my breath, and the Spirit*

Spirit of God is in my nostrils, my lips shall not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit, Job xxvii. 3,

4 But, since it is such an unruly instrument, so very difficult to be bridled or restrained, Do thou, O God, who first madest it, enable me to get the mastery of it! *Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and keep the door of my lips, that, with St. Paul, I may speak forth the words of truth and soberness, and make this unruly evil a happy instrument of much good! which that I may do,*

RESOLUTION I.

I am resolved, by the Grace of GOD, never to speak much, lest I often speak too much, and not to speak at all, rather than to no purpose.

IT is the voice of fools that is known by the multitude of words, Eccles. v. 3. In which there are divers vanities, ver. 6. and sin too, Prov. x. 19, whereas he that refraineth his lips is wise. This is that piece of Christian wisdom, which I am now resolving to look after; and therefore, never to deliver my words out to the world by number, but by weight, not by quantity, but quality: Not hiding my meaning under ambiguous terms and expressions, but fitting words exactly to express my meaning; not amusing those I converse with, with circles of impertinence and circumlocution, but coming directly to the matter by the strait line of apt expressions, so, as never to speak more than the matter requireth; nor to speak at all, when no matter requireth. For, why should I spend my breath for nothing? Alas! that is not all: if I spend it ill, it will be far worse than spending it for nothing: For, our blessed Saviour has told me, that I must answer for every idle and unprofitable, as well as profane word, Matth. xii. 36. But now, if all the words I ever spoke should be written, as I have cause to believe they are, in the book of God's

God's remembrance, how many vast volumes must they make! and if an index should be made, where to find profitable, and where idle words, how few references - would there be to the former? What multitudes to the latter? And (what is yet more terrifying) if all these words should be brought in judgement against me at the last day, how would those very words then make me speechless? And what shame and confusion of face would they then strike me with? But I trust, through the blood of my Redeemer, they will be all washed and blotted out, before I come to appear before him. In order to this, as I heartily bewail and detest my former follies in this respect; so I firmly purpose and resolve to use my utmost endeavours for the time to come, not to give way any more to such idle words and expressions, as are likely to be thus prejudicial to my eternal interest; but always to consider well before-hand, what, and how, and why I speak, and suffer *no corrupt communication to proceed out of my mouth, but that which is good, to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers*, Eph. iv. 29.

I know, there are some words, that are purely jocose, spoken with no other intent but only to promote mirth, and divert melancholy; and these words, so long as they are harmless and innocent, so long as they do not reflect dishonour upon God, nor injure the character and reputation of my neighbour, are very lawful and allowable; inasmuch as they conduce to the refreshing and reviving of my spirits, and the preservation of my health. But then, I must always take care so to wind and turn my discourse, that what recreates me in speaking, may profit others when spoke; that my words may not only be such as have no malignity in them, but such as may be useful and beneficial; not only such as do no hurt, but likewise such as may do much good

to others, as well as myself. To this end, I firmly resolve, by the grace of God, never to speak only for the sake of speaking, but to weigh each word before I speak it, and to consider the consequence and tendency of it, whether it may be really the occasion of good or evil, or tend to the edifying or scandalizing of the person I speak it to.

RESOLUTION II.

I am resolved, by the Grace of GOD, not only to avoid the wickedness of swearing falsely, but likewise the very Appearance of swearing at all.

PERJURY is a sin condemned by the very laws of nature; insomuch that I should wrong my natural faculties, should I give way to, or be guilty of it. For the same nature that tells me, the person of God is to be adored, tells me likewise, his name is to be revered; and what more horrid impiety can possibly be imagined, than to prostitute the most sacred name of the most high God, to confirm the lies of sinful men? I know, swearing in a just matter, and right manner, may be as lawful under the New, as under the Old Testament; for thus I find St. Paul saying, *As God is true*, 2 Cor. i. 18. and ver. 23. *I call God for a record upon my soul*; wherein is contained the very nature of an oath, which is, the calling God for a record and witness to the truth of what we speak: But when it is to maintain falsehood, which is to an ill purpose, or lightly and vainly, which is to no purpose at all, it is a sin of the highest aggravation, that ought, with the greatest detestation and abhorrence, to be shunned and avoided. God saith, by Moses, Lev. xix. 12. *Thou shalt not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the Lord.* And Exod. xx. 7. Deut. v. 11. *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name*

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in vain. But farther, God says by CHRIST, *Swear not at all, neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is his footstool, &c.* So that not only, by God, and by JESUS; are oaths, but swearing by any of God's creatures, is, in a manner, to swear by God himself: I swear by the heavens; can the heavens hear, or witness what I say? No; it is the glorious Majesty that rules there, that I call upon to witness the truth of the words I speak, and the sinfulness of my heart for swearing by them. Do I swear by my faith? But how is that? Can faith testify what I say? No, it is only he that wrought this faith in my heart, can witness the truth of my words. And, if I swear by the gifts of God, I do in effect swear by God himself; otherwise, I ascribe that to the creature, which is only compatible to the glorious Creator, even the knowledge of the thoughts of my heart, how secret soever they be.

But, again, there is more in the third commandment, than the devil would persuade the world there is: For, when God commands me not to take his name in vain, it is more than if he had commanded me only not to swear by it: For, I cannot persuade myself, but that every time I speak of God, when I do not think of him, I take his name in vain: And, therefore, I ought to endeavour to avoid even the mentioning of God, as well as swearing by him, unless upon urgent occasions, and with reverence and respect becoming his Majesty; for questionless, O Lord, and O God, may be spoken as vainly, as, by the Lord, and by God: And therefore, I ought never to speak such words, without thinking really in my heart, what I speak openly with my mouth, lest my name be written amongst those that take the name of God in vain. But farther still, I am resolved not only to avoid downright swearing, but likewise the very appearance of it: So that, what doth but look like an oath,

oath, shall be as odious to me, as what looks like nothing else.

R E S O L U T I O N III.

I am resolved, by the Grace of God, always to make my tongue and heart go together, so as never to speak with the one, what I do not think in the other.

AS my happiness consisteth in nearness and vicinity, so doth my holiness in likeness and conformity, to the chiefest good. I am so much the better, as I am the liker the best; and so much the holier, as I am more conformable to the holiest, or rather to him who is holiness itself. Now, one great title which the Most High is pleased to give himself, and by which he is pleased to reveal himself to us, is the God of Truth: So that I shall be so much the liker to the God of Truth, by how much I am the more constant to the truth of God. And, the farther I deviate from this, the nearer I approach to the nature of the devil, who is the father of lies, and liars too, John viii. 44. And hence it is, that of all the sins the men of fashion are guilty of, they can least endure to be charged with lying. To give a man the lie, or to say, You lie, is looked upon as the greatest affront that can be put upon them. And why so? But only because this sin of lying makes them so like their father the devil, that a man had almost as well call them devils, as liars; and therefore, to avoid the scandal and reproach, as well as the dangerous malignity of this damnable sin, I am resolved, by the blessing of God, always to tune my tongue an unison to my heart, so as never to speak any thing, but what I think really to be true. So that, if ever I speak what is not true, it shall not be the error of my will, but of my understanding.

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I know, lies are commonly distinguished into officious, pernicious, and jocose : And some may fancy some of them more tolerable than others. But, for my own part, I think they are all pernicious, and therefore, not to be jested withal, nor indulged, upon any pretence or colour whatsoever. Not as if it was a sin, not to speak exactly as a thing is in itself, or as it seems to me in its literal meaning, without some liberty granted to rhetorical-tropes and figures ; [for, so the Scripture itself would be chargeable with lies ; many things being contained in it, which are not true in a literal sense :] But, I must so use rhetorical, as not to abuse my Christian liberty ; and, therefore, never make use of hyperboles, ironies, or other tropes and figures ; to deceive or impose upon my auditors, but only for the better adorning, illustrating, or confirming the matter.

But, there is another sort of lies most men are apt to fall into, and they are promissory lies ; to avoid which, I am resolved never to promise any thing with my mouth, but what I intend to perform in my heart ; and never to intend to perform any thing, but what I am sure I can perform. For, this is the cause and occasion of most promissory lies, that we promise that absolutely, which we should promise only conditionally. For, though I may intend to do as I say now, yet there are a thousand weighty things may intervene, which may turn the balance of my intentions, or otherwise hinder the performance of my promise. So that unless I be absolutely sure I can do a thing, I must never absolutely promise to do it ; and, therefore, in all such promises, shall still put in, God willing, or, by the help of God, at the same time lifting up my heart to God, lest I take his name in vain.

RESOLUTION IV.

I am resolved, by the Grace of God, to speak of other Men's Sins only before their faces, and of their Virtues only behind their backs.

TO commend men, when they are present, I esteem almost as great a piece of folly as to reprove them, when they are absent; though I do confess, in some cases, and to some persons, it may be commendable; especially when the person is not apt to be puffed up, but spurred on by it. But to rail at others, when they hear me not, is the highest piece of folly imaginable; for, as it is impossible they should get any good, so is it impossible but that I should get much hurt by it. For, such sort of words, make the very best we can of them, are but idle and unprofitable, and may not only prove injurious to the person of whom, but even to whom they are spoken, by wounding the credit of the former, and the charity of the latter; and so by consequence, my own soul; nay, even though I speak that which is true in itself, and know to be so to me: And, therefore, this way of back-biting ought, by all means, to be avoided.

But I must, much more, have a care of raising false reports concerning any one, or of giving credit to them that raise them, or of passing my judgement, till I have weighed the matter: Lest I transgress the rules of mercy and charity, which command me not to censure any one upon others rumours, or my own surmises; nay, if the thing be in itself true, still to interpret it in the best sense. But, if I must needs be raking in other mens sores, it must not be behind their backs, but before their faces; for, the one is a great sin, and the other may be as great a duty, even to reprove my neighbour for doing any thing offensive unto God, or destructive to his own soul; still endeavouring so

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to manage the reproof, as to make his sin loathsome to him, and prevail upon him, if possible, to forsake it : But, there is a great deal of Christian prudence and discretion to be used in this, lest others may justly reprove me for my indiscreet reproof of others. I must still fit my reproof to the time when, the person to whom, and the sin against which, it is designed ; still contriving with myself how to carry on this duty so, as that by converting a sinner from the evil of his ways, I may save a soul from death, and cover a multitude of sins, Jam. v. 29. Not venting my anger against the person, but my sorrow for the sin that is reproved. Hot, passionate, and reviling words, will not so much exasperate a man against his sin that is reproved, as against the person that doth reprove it. It is not the wrath of man that worketh the righteousness of God, Jam. i. 20. But this, of all the duties, must be performed with the spirit of love and meekness ; I must first insinuate myself into his affections, and then press his sin upon his conscience, and that directly or indirectly, as the person, matter, or occasion shall require ; that so he that is reproved by me now, may have cause to bless God for me to all eternity.

RESOLUTION V.

I am resolved, by the Grace of GOD, always to speak reverently to my Superiours, humbly to my Inferiours, and civilly to all.

THE most high God, the master of this great family, the world, for the more orderly government of it, hath, according to his infinite wisdom, set some in higher, some in lower places, hath made some as stewards, others as under-servants ; and according to every man's work that he expects from him, he measures out his talents to him. Blessed be his name for it, he hath set me

in a middle form ; giving me Agar's wish, subject neither to envy on one hand, nor pity on the other; so that I have both superiours to reverence, and inferiours to condescend to. And accordingly, it is my duty so to behave myself towards them, that the reverent expressions of my mouth may manifest the obedient subjection of my heart to the power and authority God has given them over me. It is the express command of the gospel, that we should render to every man his due, *Fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour* belongeth, Rom. xiii. 13. which words plainly imply, both that it is some mens due, to receive honour, and other mens duty to give it. And accordingly, we find Paul, when he was brought before Festus, doth not say, Art thou he whom they call Festus? or thou Festus, as the misguided enthusiasts, in our days, would have said.; but, *Most noble Festus*, Acts xxvi. 25. In like manner, St. John doth not call her he writes to, in his second epistle, being a person of quality, Woman, but, *Elect lady*. And this sort of reverence is farther confirmed to us, not only by the constant custom of all nations, in all ages of the world, but it is likewise highly agreeable to the rules of right reason, as well as the order of government. For, as there is both a natural and civil superiority, a superiority in gifts and age, and a superiority likewise in office and station; so there is nothing can be more necessary, than that there should be, in both these respects a reverence and respect paid to the persons of men, answerable to these distinctions. And therefore, I cannot but condemn that rude and unmannerly behaviour of some of our modern schismatics towards their superiours, as factious and unreasonable, as well as repugnant to the dictates of the Divine Spirit, which the Prophets and Apostles were inspired and influenced by.

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And, as there is a reverence due from inferiours to superiours in point of conversation, so likewise are there some decent regards and civilities to be shewed even by superiours to their inferiours, who are always to be treated with candour and condescension, in their ordinary capacities; and even when they are considered as criminals, with meekness and moderation, insomuch that, methinks, it is one of the worst sights in the world, to see some men that are gotten upon a little higher ground than their neighbours are, to look proudly and scornfully down upon all that are below them, disdain to vouchsafe them the least favour or respect whatsoever. Such churlish, haughty, and foul-mouthed Nabals as these, are not only very unjust, and unreasonable in their behaviour to others, but they are certainly the greatest enemies to themselves, that they have in all the world besides; not only by drawing upon them the hatred and enmity of all that are about them, but likewise by tormenting themselves with such frivolous things, as such spirits commonly do. Wherefore, that I may please God, my neighbour, and myself, in what I speak, though I could exceed other men, (which is impossible for me to suppose) in every thing; I resolve by God's grace, always to behave myself so, as if I excelled them in nothing; and not only to speak reverently to them that are above me, but humbly and civilly to those that are beneath me too. I will always endeavour to use such humble and winning words, as to manifest more of my love to them than my power over them: I will alway season my tongue with favoury, not bitter expressions, not making my mouth a vent for my fury and passion to fume out at, but rather an instrument to draw others love and affection in by; still speaking as civilly unto others, as I would have them speak civilly to me.

Concerning my ACTIONS.

THE other way of my soul's putting forth and shewing herself to the world, is by her actions, which it concerns me as much to look to and regulate, as my words; forasmuch as there is not the least ill circumstance in any action, but what, unless it be repented of, must be brought into question, and answered for, at the last day: For, tho' an action cannot be denominated good, unless it be good in all circumstances and respects; yet it is always denominated bad, if it is bad only in one. As it is in music, if but one string jar, or be out of tune, the whole harmony is spoiled; so here, if but one circumstance in an action be wanting or defective, the whole action is thereby rendered immoral.

How much, therefore, doth it behove me to keep a strict watch over myself, and so to perform every action, and place every circumstance in it, that it may have its approbation in the court of heaven? Well, I am resolved, by the grace of God, to try what I can do. I know it is impossible for me to resolve upon particular actions: But howsoever I shall resolve upon such general rules, the application of which to particular acts may make them pleasing and acceptable in the sight of God; always premising this which I have resolved upon before, as the best foundation, *viz.* to square all my actions by the scripture-rule, and to do nothing but what I have, some way or other, a warrant from the word of God. Upon this fixed and steady principle,

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RESOLUTION I.

*I am resolved, by the Grace of GOD, to do every thing
in obedience to the Will of GOD.*

IT is not sufficient, that what I do is the will of God, but I must therefore do it because it is the will of God. For, what saith my Father? *My son give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways*, Prov. xxiii. 26. So that my Father will not only have my hand, but my heart too. And my feet must not walk in the ways of God, till my eyes have observed and discerned them to be so. I may do an action that is in itself good, and yet, at the same time, not do a good action, if I do not therefore do it, because it is so: For example; I may give an alms to the poor, feed the hungry, or cloath the naked: but let me examine and consider well, upon what principle these actions are founded, whether I therefore do them, because God hath commanded them; if not, my feeding the poor will be no more a good action, than the ravens feeding the prophet was, 1 Kings xvii. 6. Their feeding of the prophet was commanded by God, as well as my feeding of the poor; but I cannot say, they did a good action, because though they did do this which was commanded by God, yet being irrational creatures, they could not reflect upon that command, and so could not do this in obedience to it.

There are some persons, to the very frame and disposition of whose spirits some sins are, in their nature, odious and abominable. Thus I have known some, whose very constitutions have carried them into an antipathy to lust and luxury; and others again, who could never endure to drink beyond their thirst, much less to unman and bebest themselves by drinking to excess. And the like may be observed of covetousness, which Luther was such an enemy to, that it is said to be against his

his very nature. Now, I say, though the abstaining from these sins be highly commendable in all sorts of persons, yet, unless, together with the streams of their natural disposition, there run likewise a spiritual desire to please God, and obey his commands, their abstaining from these vices is no more than the brute-beasts themselves do, who always act according to the temper of their bodies, and are never guilty of any excesses that are prejudicial to them.

Hence, servants are commanded *to be obedient to their masters, with good will doing service as to the Lord, and not to men*, Eph. vi. 5, 6, 7. which clearly shews, that though a servant doth obey his master, yet if he doth not do it in obedience to God, he will not find acceptance with him. So that, whensoever I set my hand to any action that is good, I must still fix my eye upon God's commanding of it, and do it only in respect to that; as knowing, that if I give but a farthing to the poor, in all my life, and do it in obedience to God's commands, it shall be accepted sooner than theirs, who feed hundreds at their table every day, and have not respect to the same command.

Do I see a poor wretch ready to fall down to the earth for want of a little support, and my bowels begin to yearn towards him? Let me search into my heart, and see what it is that raises this compassion in me. If it flows only from a natural tenderness to a brother in misery, without regard to the love of God, who has commanded and enjoined it, the poor man may be succoured and relieved, but God will not be pleased or delighted with it. Again; do my friends stir me up to pray or hear, or do any other spiritual or civil action, and I therefore only do it because of their importunity? I may satisfy my friends desire, but cannot properly be said to obey the commands of God, in such a performance: So that the great and only foundation that I must re-
solve

olve to build all the actions of my life upon, is an uniform obedience to that God, by whom alone I am enabled to perform them.

RESOLUTION II.

I am resolved, by the Grace of GOD, to do every thing with Prudence and Discretion, as well as with Zeal and Affection.

WHILST I am penned up in this earthly tabernacle, I live almost as in a darksome dungeon, having no light to work by, but a little that springs in at the narrow crevices of my understanding. So that I had need to make use of all that little light and knowledge I have, to regulate the heat and zeal that sometimes fits upon my spirit. For good passions may sometimes carry me into bad actions: My zeal, when hot in the pursuit of God's glory, may sometimes hurry me beyond his laws; especially, when Christian prudence hath not first chalked out the way, and set the bounds for it: As, in discourse, my zeal may put me upon throwing pearls before swine, or using words, when silence may be more commendable: So, in my actions too, unless wisdom and discretion govern and command my affections, I shall frequently run into such as would be altogether needless and impertinent, and therefore ought to be omitted; and daily neglect several duties, which ought to be performed.

But, my understanding and discretion is chiefly requisite for the ordering of time and place, and other particular circumstances, the irregular management of which may easily spoil the best of actions. For instance, that may be a good work at one time and place, which is not at another; and may be very innocent and becoming in one person, though quite contrary in another. It is therefore the proper office of my understanding to point out the

the fittest time, and place, and person, for the performance of each action I engage in. As for example, in distributing to the poor, my hand of charity must be either guided by the eye of understanding, where, when, how much, and to whom to give; or else I may, at the same time, not only offend God, but wrong my neighbour and myself too. And so for all other actions whatsoever, which I ought therefore never to set myself about, though it be of the lowest rank, without consulting the rules of wisdom, modelled by the law of God.

RESOLUTION III.

I am resolved, by the Grace of GOD, never to set my Hand, my Head, or my Heart, about any thing but what I verily believe is good in itself, and will be esteemed so by GOD.

WITHOUT faith, the Apostle tells me, it is impossible to please God, Heb. xi. 5. For whatsoever is not of faith, is sin, Rom. xiv. 23. Where, by faith, we are not to understand that saving faith, whereby I believe that my person is justified through CHRIST; but that, whereby I believe that my works shall be accepted by GOD: For faith here is opposed to doubting; and that, not about CHRIST's dying for me, or my living in him, but about the particular actions of my life. *He that doubteth, saith the Apostle, is damned if he eat; that is, He that eateth that which he doubteth whether it may be lawfully eat or no, is damned, because he sins in doing it, and therefore may be damned for it. But why so? because he eateth not of faith; because he doth that which he knows not whether he may do or no, not believing it to be really good in itself, or acceptable unto God.* And, though the Apostle here instances only in that particular action of eating, yet what he says with relation to that, is properly applicable to all the.

the other actions of life : For he afterwards subjoins, *Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin* ; whatsoever it is, good or bad, if not done by faith, it is sin.

And truly, this particular will be of great use through my whole life, for the avoiding of many sins, and for the doing of much good : For, many things, which are good in themselves, may, for want of faith, become quite otherwise to me ; my heart not believing what I do is good, my hand can never make it so. Or, if I think what I do is bad, though it be not so in itself, yet my very thinking it so, will make it so to me.

And this is what we call doing any thing with a good conscience, or keeping, as St. Paul did, our conscience void of offence. And to go contrary to the dictates of my conscience in this particular, is to transgress the commands of God. For in this, conscience is as God's vicegerent in my soul ; what conscience commands, God commands ; what conscience forbids, God forbids ; that is, I am as really under the power of conscience, as the commands of God in such a case. So that, if I do not obey the former, it is impossible for me to obey the latter. But how much then doth it behove me to see, that my conscience be rightly informed in every thing ? For as, if a judge be misinformed, it is impossible he should pass righteous-judgement ; so, if conscience be misinformed, it is impossible I should do a righteous act. And, in what a miserable case shall I then be ? If I do what is in itself sinful, though my conscience tells me it is good, yet I sin, because the act in itself is sinful ; and if I do what in itself is good, and my conscience tells me it is bad, because my conscience tells me it is bad, I sin because my conscience tells me so : So that as my conscience is, so will my actions be.

For this reason, I resolve, in the presence of my great Creator, never to do any thing, till I have
first

first informed my conscience, from the word of God, whether it be lawful for me to do it, or no; or in case it be not determined there, to make a strict search and inquiry into each circumstance of it, considering with myself what good or evil may issue from it, and so what good or evil there is in it; and according as my conscience, upon the hearing of the argument on both sides, shall decide the matter, I shall do, or not do it; never undertaking any thing upon mere surmises, because it may be good, but upon a real and thorough persuasion that it is so.

RESOLUTION IV.

I am resolved, by the Grace of GOD, to do all things for the Glory of GOD.

AS I was not made by, so neither for, myself; for God, says the wise man, *made all things for himself*, Prov. xvi. 4. And being thus made for GOD, it follows of course, that I ought to act for God; otherwise I shall frustrate the end of my creation. Inasmuch that whatsoever I make my chief aim in what I do, I make that my God: Do I aim at the glory of the All-glorious Jehovah? It is him I make my God: Do I aim at riches? Then it is Mammon I make my God: And therefore it is, that covetousness is called idolatry, Col. iii. 5. Do I aim at pleasures? It is my senses I make my God, Phil. iii. 19. Do I aim at popular applause, or worldly advancement? Or, do I aim at my own health or life? These are my gods. For what is worshipping, but making all the powers of my soul, and actions of my body to bow and stoop to them? Hence it is, that the most High God, who hath said, He will not give his glory to another, hath been so express in commanding me to do all things to his glory, *Whether ye eat or drink, says the A-*

possible,

apostle, *or whatsoever you do, do all things to the glory of God*, 1 Cor. x. 31.

But how can I, poor worm, be said to do any thing to the glory of the eternal God? Why, in the same manner as he is said to do what he doth for his own glory; and how is that? By manifesting his glory to others. Thus, if I can but so live and act, as thereby to evidence, that the God I serve is a glorious God, glorious in holiness, glorious in goodness, glorious in wisdom, glorious in power, and the like; this is doing all things to the glory of God. For example, by praying to God, I avouch him to be a God, infinite in knowledge, that he is present with me, and hears me pray, where-soever I am; and I own him to be infinite in mercy, in that he will suffer such a sinful creature as I am, to address myself to him, &c. And so there is not the least action I undertake, but I am so to manage it, as to manifest the glory of God by it, making it my end and design so to do; otherwise let me do what I will, I am sure to sin; for though I confess, a good end can never make a bad action good, yet a bad end will always make a good action bad: So that, as ever I would do any thing that is good, I must be sure to do it to the glory of God.

RESOLUTION V.

I am resolved, by the Grace of GOD, to mingle such Recreations with my Business, as to further my Business by my Recreations.

HAVING wholly devoted myself to God, all I have, or am, is still to be improved for him; insomuch that was it not for the necessities of nature, every moment of my life should, and ought to be spent in the immediate worship and service of him. But though nature requires some time from my solemn serving him, for the recreating of myself;

self; yet grace requireth, that this recreating of myself should still be for the promoting his service; so that my recreations do not only fit me for further service, but they in themselves should, some way or other, be serviceable to him; which that they may be, I must have as great a care in the choice, as in the use of my recreation.

There are some recreations that are so far from conducing to his service; that they may make more for the incensing of his wrath: As drinking and gaming, which though in themselves lawful, yet, as they often prove an occasion of swearing, lying, cheating and contention amongst men, and, by consequence, of wrath in God; so they ought, by all means, to be shunned and avoided. Indeed, it may be questioned, whether gaming be ever a lawful recreation? For, either it is a lottery, or not. If it be a lottery, it is not lawful, because it is a great presumption and sin, to set God at work to recreate ourselves; for poor nothings to employ the chiefest good, immediately to determine such frivolous and trifling impertinencies. If it be not a lottery, then it is not a pure recreation; for if it depends upon man's wit and study, it exercises his brain and spirits as much as if he were about other things. So that being on one side not lawful, on the other side, no recreation; it can, on no side, be a lawful recreation.

For, what is the end of recreation, but to revive my languishing spirits, to let them rest and be quiet a little, when they are tired with too much exercise, that they be fresher, livelier, and fitter for work afterwards? Hence it is, that God indeed hath provided a recreation for all sensible creatures, sleep; which is the rest of the spirits in the nerves. When the little animal spirits have been all the day running up and down upon the soul's errands, to lie down still and quiet, is a great refreshment and revivement to them, provided still, that it be moderately

derately used. Whereas the indulging ourselves too much in it, is rather a clogging and stupifying of them; as we see in our bodies, which, when not accustomed to, are most averse from, and unfit for exercise.

So that the chief and only time for recreation, is, when my spirits are either weary with labour and study, or else called in to some necessary employment in some other place; as at, and after meals, especially such as are of a hard digestion; for then the spirits have enough to do, to turn the food we eat into good nourishment. And, therefore, the intenseness of study, running, wrestling, and such-like violent exercises, are not proper at such a time; because, in studying, we draw the spirits from the stomach to the head; so, in the other exercise, such as moderate walking, conference and free discourse, about common but necessary points, we send them from the stomach into other parts of the body, where they are to be set on work.

But, that which I have found the best recreation, both to my body and mind, whensoever either of them stands in need of it, is music, which exercises, at once, both my body and my soul; especially, when I play myself. For then, methinks, the same motion that my hand makes upon the instrument, the instrument makes upon my heart; it calls in my spirits, composes my thoughts, delights my ear, recreates my mind, and so, not only fits me for after-business, but fills my heart, at the present, with pure and useful thoughts, so that when the music sounds the sweetliest in my ears, truth commonly flows the clearest into my mind. And hence it is, that I find my soul is become more harmonious, by being accustomed so much to harmony, and so averse to all manner of discord, that the least jarring sound, either in notes or words, seem very harsh and unpleasant to me.

That there is something more than ordinary in music, appears from David's making use of it, for driving away the evil spirit from Saul, and Elisha for the bringing of the good spirit upon himself. From which I am induced to believe, that there is really a sort of secret and charming power in it, that naturally dispells from the mind, all or most of those black humours, which the evil spirit uses to brood upon, and, by composing it into a more regular, sweet and docible disposition, renders it the fitter for the holy Spirit to work upon, the more susceptible of divine grace, and more faithful messenger, whereby to convey truth to the understanding. But however that be, I must necessarily acknowledge, that of all recreations, it is by far the most suitable to my temper and disposition, as it is not only an exercise to my body, but to my mind too; my spirits being thereby made the more nimble and active, and, by consequence, the fitter to wait upon my soul, and be employed by her, in whatever business she is engaged.

But in this and all other recreations, I must always take care not to exceed my measure, either in point of time or intention; I must not follow them too close, nor spend too many hours in them; but still resolve to use them, as they may not become a snare to me, but answer the ends for which they were designed; that when God shall call me to it, I may give him as good an account of my recreations, as of my necessary duties.

Concerning my Relations.

BUT be not deceived, O my soul! thou art not yet advanced far enough; it is not sufficient to pretend to holiness in my thoughts and affections,

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and in my words and actions ; unless I express it likewise in all the relations and conditions of life. The commandments of God are said to be exceeding broad ; they extend themselves to every capacity I can possibly be in, not only enjoining me to live soberly in respect to myself, but righteously to my neighbour, obediently to my sovereign, loving to my wife, and faithfully to my people ; otherwise I cannot live holily unto God ; and therefore, if I would be thoroughly religious, I must farther endeavour to fix my resolutions with regard to the several duties the Most High expects from me, in all these particular relations I bear to him, during my sojourning here on earth.

RESOLUTION I.

I am resolved, by the Grace of GOD, to honour and obey the King, or Prince, whom God is pleased to set over me, as well as to expect that he should safeguard and protect me, whom God is pleased to set under him.

THE King of kings, and Lord of lords, the great and glorious Monarch of all the world, having enacted many gracious laws, is pleased to set over every kingdom and nation, such persons as may put them in execution. So that, I cannot but look upon a lawful king, as truly a representative of the Most High God, as a parliament is of the people ; and am therefore persuaded, that whoever rebels against him, rebels against God himself, not only in that he rebels against the ordinance of God, and so, against the God of that ordinance, but because he rebels against him, whom God hath set up as his Vicegerent, to represent his person and execute his laws in such a part of his dominions.

Hence it is, that these two precepts, *Fear God, and honour the king*, are so often joined together in

holy writ ; for he that fears God's power cannot but honour his authority ; and he that honours not the king, that represents God, cannot be said to fear God, who is represented by him. And hence likewise, it is, that God hath been as strict and exprefs in enjoining us obedience to our governours as to himself ; for thus saith the Lord of hosts, Rom. xiii. 1. *Let every soul be subject to the higher powers. Why ? Because there is no power but of God ; the powers that be, are ordained of God.*

And he hath denounced as great a judgement against such as rebel against the magistrate, as he hath ordained against those that rebel against himself : *For whosoever resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God ; and they that resist, shall receive to themselves damnation,* ver. 2. So that the wrath of God shall as certainly fall upon those that rise up against the king, as upon those that fight against God. And no wonder, that the punishment should be the same, when the fault is the same : For he that fights against his king, fights against God himself, who hath invested him with that power and authority to govern his people, representing his own glorious Majesty before them.

Upon this ground it is, that I believe the wickedness of a prince cannot be a sufficient plea for the disobedience of his subjects ; for it is not the holiness, but the authority of God that he represents, which the most wicked, as well as the most holy person may be endowed with : And therefore, when the gospel first began to spread itself over the earth, though there was no Christian king, or supreme magistrate, of what title soever, to cherish and protect it ; nay though the civil powers were then the greatest enemies to it ; yet, even then were the disciples of CHRIST enjoined to submit themselves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake.

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Infomuch that, did I live amongst the Turks, I should look upon it as my duty to obey the Grand Signior, in all his lawful edicts, as well as the most Christian and pious king in the world. For suppose a prince be never so wicked, it doth not follow, that I must not obey him. In such a case, I have another duty added to this; and that is, to pray for him, and intercede with God for his conversion: For, thus hath the King of Kings commanded, that *prayers, supplications, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men, so more especially, for kings and those that are in authority, that we may live a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty,* 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2. So that, whenever I address to the court of heaven, I must be sure to remember my sovereign upon earth, that God would be pleased to enable his servant to reign on earth, as himself doth in heaven, in righteousness and mercy. But especially, in case of any seeming or real default or defect, though I do not think it a subject's duty to judge or censure their sovereign's actions, I am to be the more earnest in my prayers and intercessions for him.

And, if I am thus strictly obliged to honour, obey, and pray for a bad prince, how much more should I pay those duties to one, who represents God, not only in his authority, but in his holiness too? In this case, sure, as there is a double engagement to reverence and obedience, so I am doubly punishable, if I neglect to shew it, either to the prince himself, or those that are set under him; for the same obligations that lie upon me, for my obedience to the king, bind me likewise to obey his inferiour officers and magistrates, that act under him; and that for this reason, because, as he represents God, so they represent him; and, therefore, whatever they command, in his name, I look upon it as much my duty to obey, as if it was commanded by his own mouth; and, accordingly, do,
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from this moment, by the grace of God, resolve to put this duty in practice.

RESOLUTION II.

I am resolved, by the same Divine Grace, to be as constant in loving of my Wife, as cautious in chusing her.

THough it be not necessary for me to resolve upon marrying, yet it may not be improper to resolve, in case I should, to follow these rules of duty; first in the choice of a wife; and, secondly, in the affection that I ought to bear towards her.

As for the first, I shall always endeavour to make choice of such a woman for my spouse, who hath first made choice of CHRIST as a spouse for herself; that none may be made one flesh with me, who is not made also one spirit with CHRIST my Saviour. For I look upon the image of CHRIST as the best mark of beauty I can behold in her; and the Grace of God, as the best portion I can receive with her. These are the excellencies, which though not visible to carnal eyes, are nevertheless agreeable to a spiritual heart; and such as all wise and good men cannot chuse but be enamoured with. For my own part, they seem to me such necessary qualifications, that my heart trembles at the thoughts of ever having a wife without them. What? shall I marry one that is wedded already to her sins? or have possession of her body only, when the devil hath possession of her soul? shall such a one be united to me here, who shall be separated from me for ever hereafter, and be condemned to scorch in everlasting burning? No, if it ever be my lot to enter into that state, I beg of God, that he would direct me in the choice of such a wife only to lie in my bosom here, as may afterwards be admitted to rest in Abraham's bosom to all eternity; such a one,

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one, that we may be both entitled to sing, to rejoice, and be blessed together for ever, in heaven.

That this, therefore, may be my portion and felicity, I firmly resolve never to set upon a design, before I have first solicited the throne of grace, and begged of my heavenly Father, to honour me with the partnership of one of his beloved children; and shall afterwards be as careful and cautious as I can, never to fix my affections upon any woman for a wife, till I am thoroughly persuaded of the grounds I have to love her, as a true Christian.

If I could be thus happy, as to meet with a wife of these qualities and endowments, it would be impossible for me not to be hearty and sincere in my affection toward her, even though I had the greatest temptations to place them upon another: For, how could I chuse but love her, who has God for her father, the church for her mother, and heaven for her portion; who loves God, and is beloved of him? especially, when I consider, that thus to love her, will not only be my duty but my happiness too.

As to the duty, it is frequently inculcated in the scripture, that *husbands should love their wives*, and that not with a common love, but as *Christ loved his Church*, Eph. v. 25. yea, *as their own body*, ver. 28. or, *as themselves*, ver. 33. and they are so to love them, *as not to be bitter against them*, Col. iii. 19. not to be passionate or angry with them upon every light matter, nor suffer their resentments to rise to that height, upon any occasion whatsoever, as to abate the least spark of conjugal affection towards them, but to *nourish and cherish them, even as the Lord the church*. In a word, to do all the kind offices they can for them, in their civil capacities, and to help and forward them, by all means possible in the way that leads to heaven; that as they are united in the flesh, so they may likewise be

be united in the spirit, and raised and rewarded together, at the general resurrection

And, as love is the great duty, so it is likewise the chief happiness of a married state. I do not mean that love whereby she loves me, but that wherewith I love her; for, if I myself have not a cordial esteem and affection for her, what happiness will it be to me, to be beloved by her? or rather, what a misery would it be to be forced to live with one I know I cannot love? As ever, therefore, I desire to be happy, I must perform my duty in this particular, and never aim at any other end, in the choice of a wife, or expect any other happiness in the enjoyment of her, but what is founded in the principle of pure and inviolable love. If I should court and marry a woman for riches, then, whensoever they fail, or take their flight, my love and my happiness must drop and vanish together with them. If I chuse her for beauty only, I shall love her no longer than while that continues, which is only till age or sickness blasts it; then farewell, at once, both duty and delight.

But if I love her for her virtues, and for the sake of GOD, who has enjoined it as a duty, that our affections should not be alienated, or separated by any thing but death; then, though all the other sandy foundations fail, yet will my happiness remain entire; even though I should not perceive those mutual returns of love, which are due from her to me upon the same bottom. But, oh! the happiness of that couple, whose inclinations to each other are as mutual as their duties; whose affections, as well as persons, are linked together with the same tie! This is the chief condition required to make the state of matrimony happy or desirable, and shall be the chief motive, with me, to influence me to enter into it. For, though it be no happiness to be beloved by one I do not love; yet, it is certainly

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very great one to be beloved by one I do. If this, then, be my lot, to have mutual expressions of love from the person I fix my affections upon, what joy and comfort will it raise in my heart? with what peace and amity shall we live together here? and what glory and felicity may we not promise ourselves hereafter?

What is here said of the duty of man in chusing and loving of a wife, may be likewise applied to a woman's duty in chusing and loving her husband. But being not so immediately concerned in this, I pass on to my next resolution.

R E S O L U T I O N III.

I am resolved, by the Grace of G O D, to do my endeavour to give to G O D whatsoever Children he shall be pleased to give me; that as they are mine by Nature, they may be his by Grace.

I Have sometimes wondered at the providence of God, in bringing so many millions of people out of the loins of one man; and cannot but make this use of it, even to stir up myself to a double diligence, in bringing up my children *in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*. For who knows, but the salvation of ten thousand souls may depend upon the education of one single child?

If I train up my son in the ways of religion, and teach him what it is to keep a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man; he will then not only have an inward sense of his own duty, but take all possible care to instil it into others, whether children or servants that are committed to his charge; and these, again, will do the same to theirs, by teaching them to walk in the same path; till, by degrees, the piety and holiness of one man has diffused itself to all succeeding generations. But now, on the other hand, if I neglect the care of my son's education, and suffer the leprosy of sin
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and wickedness to taint and corrupt him, it is great odds, without an extraordinary interposition of divine grace, but the infection may spread itself over all my posterity; and so draw down upon me curses and accusations of ten thousand souls in hell, which might otherwise have been praising and blessing God for me, to all eternity, in heaven.

Hence it is, that I am resolved to endeavour to be a spiritual, as well as natural father to my children; yea, to take more care to get a portion for their souls in heaven, than to make provision for their bodies upon earth. For, if he be accounted worse than an infidel that provides not for his family, the sustenance of their bodies, what is he that suffers his family to neglect the salvation of their souls?

That nothing of this, therefore, may be laid to my charge, if ever Providence sees fit to bless me with children of my own, I will take effectual care, so soon as conveniently I can, to devote them unto God by baptism; that what guilt they have contracted, by coming through my loins, may be washed away by the laver of regeneration; and then to be constantly soliciting at the throne of grace, that he who hath given them to me, would be pleased likewise to give himself to them.

The next thing to be done, as soon as they come to be capable of instruction, is to take all occasions, and make use of all means, to work the knowledge of God into their heads, and the grace of CHRIST into their hearts; by teaching them to remember their Creator in the days of their youth; by acquainting them with the duties that he that made them expects from them; with the rewards they shall have, if dutiful; and the punishments they shall feel, if disobedient children; still accommodating my expressions to the shallow capacity of their tender years. And, according to their doing, or not doing, of what they have been told, I shall

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reward them with what is most pleasing, or punish them with what is most displeasing to their years. To speak to them of heaven and eternal glory, will not encourage them so much, as to give them their childish pleasures and desires : And the denouncing of a future hell will not affright them so much, as the inflicting a present smart. Hence it is, that Solomon so often inculcates this upon parents, as their duty to their children, that they should not spare the rod, lest they spoil the child.

But I must still take care to let them understand, that what I do is from a principle of love and affection to them, not of fury and indignation against them : For, by this means, God may correct me for correcting them : I may set before my children such an example of indiscreet and sinful passion, as they will be apt enough to learn, without my teaching them. On the other hand, it behoves me, if possible, so to order my family, that my children may not see or hear, and so not learn, any thing but goodness in it ; for commonly, according to what we learn when we are young, we practise when we are old. And, therefore, as I shall take great care that my children learn nothing that is evil or sinful at home ; so likewise, that they do not come into such company abroad, where their innocence may be assaulted with swearing, cursing, or any kind of profane or obscene discourse, which the generality of our youth are so obnoxious to.

Or, at least, if this is not wholly to be avoided, to prevent those poisonous weeds from taking root in the heart, it behoves me to take all opportunities of discoursing to them of GOD and CHRIST, of the immortality of their souls, and the future state they are to be doomed to in another world, when they have lived a little while in this ; that, according as they grow in years, they may grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Christ. And when they come to years of discretion,

CHRISTIAN RESOLUTIONS.

capable of doing farther honour and service to God and their country, by some calling or profession, I must be sure to place them in such a one as may be no hinderance to that high and heavenly calling, which they have in Christ Jesus, but rather contribute to further and promote it; that, being like tender plants, engrafted into the true vine, they may bring much fruit, to God's glory, to my comfort, and their own salvation.

RESOLUTION IV.

I am resolved, by the Grace of GOD, to do my Duty to my Servants, as well as expect they should do theirs to me.

IT was Joshua's, and, by God's grace, it shall be my resolution, that *I and my house fear the LORD*. I, in the first place, and then my house; for, if I myself do not, I cannot expect that they should. So that, for the ordering of my family in general, I must not only press their duty upon them, but likewise practise my own duty, in suppressing all vicious and lewd conversation, and composing all strife and contention amongst them; in praying every day, at least, twice with them; in catechising and expounding the principles of religion to them, and in calling for an account of every sermon and godly discourse they hear, either in private or in public; in seeing that they constantly frequent the divine ordinances, and that they behave themselves so conscientiously therein, that they may be, some way or other, the better by them. And to these ends, I think it my duty to allow my servants some time, every day, wherein to serve God, as well as to see they spend their other hours in serving me; and to make them sensible that they do not serve me only for myself, but ultimately and principally in reference unto God; their
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serving me making way for my better serving God.

And, for this reason, I cannot believe, but it is as great a sin to cumber my servants, as myself, with too much worldly business. For how can they spend any time in the service of God, when I require all their time in my own? And, how justly should I be condemned, if by this means, I should bring them into a sort of necessity of sinning, either in not obeying God, or not obeying me? not that I think it a servant's duty, to neglect his Creator to serve his master; on the contrary, he is obliged, in all cases, where their commands interfere, to obey GOD; rather than man. But where they do not, there is a strict injunction upon all *servants*, that they should be obedient to their masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as unto Christ, Eph. vi. 5. But how with fear and trembling? Why, fearing lest they should offend God, in offending them, and trembling at the thoughts of being disobedient to the divine command, which enjoins them to be obedient to their masters in all things, *not answering again*, Tit. ii. 9. that is, not repining at their master's lawful commands, not muttering against them, as some are apt to do: For it is as great a sin in servants, to speak irreverently to their masters, as in masters to speak passionately to their servants.

But how are servants to give obedience to their masters, *with singleness of heart, as unto Christ*; why, by obeying them only in obedience unto Christ; that is, they are therefore to do their master's will, because it is the LORD's will they should do it; serving them, *not with eye-service, as men please, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with good will doing service, as unto the LORD, and not to men*, Eph. vi. 6, 7. Col. iii. 22. This is the duty therefore that I shall be oft inculcating upon my servants, and shall oft be reflecting upon myself,

myself, that what I require for my own service may be always in subordination to God's, who is our common Lord and master, whose laws are equally obliging to all ranks and conditions of men, and in whose sight there is no respect of persons.

RESOLUTION V.

I am resolved, by the Grace of GOD, to feed the flock that God shall set me over, with wholesome food, neither starving them by idleness; poisoning with error, nor puffing them up with impertinence.

AND here I cannot but declare, that ever since I knew what it was to study, I have found by experience, that spiritual and intellectual pleasures do as far surpass those that are temporal and sensual, as the soul exceeds the body. And, for this reason, as I always thought the study and profession of divinity to be the noblest and most agreeable of all others, as carrying with it its own encouragement and reward; so I have often wondered with myself, that the greatest persons in the world should not be desirous and ambitious of exercising their parts in the study of this necessary, as well as sublime science, and even devoting themselves to the profession of it. For, do they aspire after honour? what greater honour can there be, than to be the mouth of God to the people, and of the people unto God; to have the Most High himself, not only to speak by them, but in them too? What greater honour than to have a commission from the King of Kings, to represent himself before his people, and call them, in his name, to turn from the error of their ways, and walk in the paths of God to everlasting glory? What greater honour than to be an instrument, in his hand, to bring poor souls from the gates of hell, to set them among princes in the court of heaven? Do they thirst after pleasures? What greater pleasure can they have, than

to make it their business to feed themselves and others with the bread and water of life ?

But stay, my soul, let not thy thoughts run only upon the dignity of thy function, and the spiritual pleasures that attend the faithful discharge of it; but think likewise upon the strict account thou must give of it in another life : The serious consideration of which as it cannot but be a great comfort to the true and faithful pastor, who has diligently fed his flock with the sincere milk of God's word ; so must it be a great terrour and confusion to the slothful and negligent, the false and deceitful dispensers of the divine mysteries, who have either carelessly lost, or treacherously deluded the souls of those committed to their charge, which they must one day answer for, as well as for their own. And, therefore, that nothing of this kind may ever be laid to my charge, I solemnly promise and resolve, before God, so to demean myself in the exercise of my ministerial function, as to make the care of souls, especially of those committed to my charge, the chief study and business of my life.

And that, without partiality or exception: I must not single out some of the best of my flock, such as I have the highest respect for, or have received the greatest obligations from ; but minister to every one according to their several necessities. If I meet with men of knowledge and virtue, my business must be to confirm and establish them therein ; if with those that are ignorant and immoral, to teach and instruct them in the ways of religion, and by all means possible, to reclaim and reduce them to the exercise of their duty ; always remembering, that as the Blessed Jesus, the great shepherd and bishop of our souls, was not sent, save unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance ; so it

is the indispensable duty of his Apostles and ministers, (and by the grace of God, I shall make it mine) to follow his example in this particular; to spare no time nor pains in the reformation of sinners, though it be never so irksome and difficult to accomplish; even though I should meet with such as the prophet David speaks of, who *hate to be reformed, and cast my words behind them.* And, therefore as I know it is my duty, so I shall always endeavour to take pleasure in the several offices I perform of this kind, to strengthen the weak, heal the wounded, and bind up the broken heart; to call in those that err and go astray, and seek and save them that are lost.

To these ends, though preaching is without doubt, a most excellent and useful, as well as necessary duty, (especially if it be performed, as it ought, with zeal and reverence, and the doctrine applied and pressed home, with sincerity of affection) yet, I shall not think it sufficient to instruct my people only from the pulpit, but take all opportunities to instil good thoughts and principles into their minds in my private conversation. I know it is impossible for all ministers frequently to visit every particular person or family in their parish, there being in some parishes, especially in and about London, so many thousands of souls: But, howsoever, if it should please the Lord to call me to such a flock, though I cannot visit all, I shall visit as many as I can; especially those that are sick and infirm; and be sure to feed them with the sincere milk of the word, such as may turn to their spiritual nourishment, and make them grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST. I will not fill their heads with speculative notions and niceties in divinity; (which, among the less judicious, are very often the occasion of heresy and error, and sometimes

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also of delusion and distraction :) But my chief care shall be to instruct them in those necessary truths which their Christian faith indispensably obliges them to know and believe, and press them to the performance of those duties, without which they cannot be saved ; meekly and impartially reproving the particular vices they are most inclined and addicted to, and cheerfully encouraging and improving whatever virtuous actions they are, any of them, exemplary in, and whatever good habits and inclinations the divine grace has put into their hearts.

And since love and charity is the great characteristic of our profession, the bond and cement of all other Christian duties, in order to make my ministry the more successful, I resolve, in the last place, not only to avoid all differences and disputes with them myself, but amicably to compose all such as may arise among the neighbours. In a word, I shall make it my endeavour, in all things, so to approve myself as a faithful minister, both in life and doctrine before them, that at the last day, when the great God shall call for my parish, and myself to appear before him, I may be prepared to give an account of both ; at least, to answer for as many of them as he requires ; and may, with joy and comfort, pronounce this sentence of my Saviour, if it may, without offence, be applied to his ministers, *behold I, and the children which thou hast given me.*

R E S O L U T I O N VI.

I am resolved, by the Grace of GOD, to be as faithful and constant to my Friend, as I would have my Friend to be faithful and constant to me.

HAVING before resolved to be zealous in loving God, I here resolve to be as constant in loving my friend. But why do I resolve upon this? Is it possible to live and not to love? This to me seems as plain a contradiction, as to live and not to live. For love, in my opinion, is as much the life of the soul, as the soul is the life of the body. So that, for my own part, I shall expect to cease to live, at the very moment that I cease to love; nay, I do not look upon love only as my life, but as the joy, and comfort of it too. And for this reason, I shall never envy any man for his riches, pleasures, or preferments, provided that I can but enjoy the persons my soul delights in, viz. CHRIST in the first place, and my friend and neighbour in the second.

But then I must have a great care, where, and how, I place this affection; for if I place it wrong, my very loving will be sinning. And therefore, I shall always endeavour to make such only my friends, as are friends to God. Not that I look upon it as necessary to love my friends always under that notion only as they are friends of God; for then, no love but that which is spiritual would be lawful; whereas there is, doubtless, a natural love, that is no less a duty, and by consequence, no less lawful, than the other; as, the love of parents towards their children, and children towards their parents; and the mutual complacency that arises betwixt friends, as well as relations, from the harmony and agreement of humours and tempers. Thus our Saviour is said to have loved St. John more than any of his other disciples, which cannot be understood

understood of spiritual love; for this, undoubtedly, was equal to all; but being a man subject to the like passions (though not imperfections) as we are, He placed more natural affection upon, and might have more natural complacency in John, than in his other disciples.

And, therefore, when I say, I am to make such my friends only, as are friends to God, my meaning is, that I will make none my friends, but such as I know to be good men, and good Christians, such as deserve my love in a spiritual as well as a natural sense; and since I may lawfully love my friend in both these senses, the one is so far from being exclusive, that it is really perfective of the other. And for this reason, as the spiritual good of my friend is always to be preferred before that which is temporal, I am resolved to found the one upon the other: I will always be ready, as oft as he stands in need, either of advice, encouragement, or assistance, to do him all the kind offices I can in his worldly affairs, to promote his interest, vindicate his character from secret aspersions, and defend his person from open assaults: To be faithful and punctual in the performance of my promises to him, as well as in keeping the secrets he has intrusted me with. But all these things are to be done with a tender regard to the honour of God, and the duties of religion; so that the services I do him in his temporal concerns, must be still consistent with, and subservient to, the spiritual interest and welfare of his immortal soul, in which I am principally obliged to manifest my friendship towards him. If I see him wander out of the right way, I must immediately take care to advertise him of it, and use the best means I can to bring him back to it. Or if I know him to be guilty of any reigning vices, I must endeavour to convince him of the danger and malignity of them, and importune and persuade him to amend and forsake them.

them. And lastly, I must be as constant in keeping my friend, as cautious in chusing him, still continuing the heat of my affections towards him, in the day of his affliction, as well as in the height of his prosperity.

These are the rules, whereby I resolve to express my friendship unto others, and whereby I would have others to express their friendship unto me.

Concerning my TALENTS.

HAVING so solemnly devoted myself to God, according to the covenant he hath made with me, and the duty I owe to him; not only what I am, and what I do, but likewise what I have, ought still to be improved for him. And this I am bound to, not only upon a federal, but even a natural account; for whatsoever I have, I received from him, and therefore, all the reason in the world whatsoever I have, should be improved for him. For, I look upon myself, as having no other propriety in what I enjoy, than a servant hath in what he is intrusted with to improve for his master's use: Thus, though I should have ten thousand pounds a year, I should have no more of my own, than if I had but two-pence in all the world. For it is only committed to my care for a season, to be employed and improved to the best advantage, and will be called for again at the grand Audit, when I must answer for the use or abuse of it; so that, whatsoever in a civil sense I can call my own, that, in a spiritual sense, I must esteem as God's. And therefore it nearly concerns me, to manage all the talents I am entrusted with, as things I must give a strict account for at the day of judgement. As God bestows his mercies upon me, through

through the greatness of his love and affection, so I am to restore his mercies back again to him, by the holiness of my life and conversation. In a word, whatever I receive from his bounty, I must, someway or other, lay out for his glory; accounting nothing mine own, any farther than as I improve it, for God's sake, and the spiritual comfort of my soul.

In order to this, I shall make it my endeavour, by the blessing of God, to put in practice the following resolutions :

RESOLUTION I.

I am resolved, if possible, to redeem my Time past, by using a double Diligence for the future, to employ and improve all Gifts and Endowments, both of Body and Mind, to the Glory and Service of my great Creator.

TIME, health, and parts, are three precious talents, generally bestowed upon men, but seldom improved for God. To go no farther than myself, how much time and health have I enjoyed, by God's grace? And how little have I laid out for his honour? On the contrary, how oft have I offended, affronted, and provoked him, even when he has been courting me with his favours, and daily pouring forth his benefits upon me? This, alas! is a sad truth, which whensoever I seriously reflect upon, I cannot but acknowledge the continuance of my life as the greatest instance of God's mercy and goodness, as well as the greatest motive to my gratitude and obedience. In a due sense therefore, of the vanities and follies of my younger years, I desire to take shame to myself for what is past, and do this morning humbly prostrate myself before the throne of Grace, to implore God's pardon, and to make solemn promises and resolutions, for the future to cast off the works of darkness, and

to put on the armour of light, and not only so, but to redeem the precious minutes I have squandered away, by husbanding those that remain, to the best advantage. I will not trifle and sin away my time in the pleasures of sense, or the impertinencies of business, but shall always employ it in things that are necessary and useful, and proportion it to the weight and importance of the work or business I engage myself in; allotting such a part of it for this business, and such a part for that, so as to leave no intervals for unlawful, or unnecessary actions to thrust themselves in, and pollute my life and conversation.

For, since it has pleased God to favour me with the blessing of health, and I am not certain how soon I may be deprived of it, and thrown upon a bed of sickness, which may deprive me of the use of my reason, or make me incapable of any thing else, but grappling with my distemper; it highly concerns me to make a due use of this blessing, while I have it; to improve these parts and gifts that God has endowed me with, to the manifestation of his glory, the salvation of my soul, and the public good of the community whereof I am a member.

To these ends, it will be requisite for me frequently to consider with myself, which way my weak parts may be the most usefully employed, and to bend them to those studies and actions, which they are naturally the most inclined to, and delighted in, with the utmost vigour and application; more particularly in spiritual matters, to make use of all opportunities for the convincing others of God's love to them, and their sins against God; of their misery by nature, and happiness by CHRIST, and when the truth of God happens to be any ways traduced or opposed, to be as valiant in the defence of it, as its enemies are violent in their assaults against it. And as I thus resolve to employ my in-

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ward gifts and faculties for the glory and service of God; so,

RESOLUTION II.

I am resolved, by the divine Grace, to employ my Riches, the outward Blessings of Providence, to the same End; and to observe such a due Medium in the dispensing of them, as to avoid Prodigality on the one Hand, and Covetousness on the other.

THIS, without doubt, is a necessary resolution, but it is likewise very difficult to put in practice, without a careful observance of the following rules.

First, never to lavish out my substance, like the prodigal, in the revels of sin and vanity; but, after a due provision for the necessities and conveniencies of life, to lay up the overplus for acts of love and charity towards my indigent brethren. I must consider the uses and ends for which God has entrusted me with such and such possessions; that they were not given me for the pampering my body, the feeding my lusts, or puffing me up with pride and ambition; but for advancing his glory, and my own, and the public good. But why do I say given? When, as I before observed, I have no propriety in the riches I possess: They are only lent me for a few years to be dispensed and distributed, as my great Lord and Master sees fit to appoint, *viz.* for the benefit of the poor and necessitous, which he has made his deputies, to call for and receive his money at my hands. And this, indeed, is the best use I can put it to, for my own advantage as well as theirs: For the money I bestow upon the poor, I give to God to lay up for me, and I have his infallible word and promise for it, that it shall be paid me again with unlimited interest out of his heavenly treasury, which is infinite, eternal, and inexhaustible. Hence it is, that whenever I see any fit object of charity, methinks I hear the Most High say unto me, give this poor

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brother so much of my stock, which thou hast in thy hand, and I will place it to thy account, as given to myself; and, *Look what thou layest out, and it shall be paid thee again.*

The second rule is, never to spend a penny where it can be better spared; nor to spare it, where it can be better spent. And this will oblige me, whensoever any occasion offers, of laying out money, considerately to weigh the circumstances of it, and according as the matter, upon mature deliberation, requires, I must not grudge to spend it; or, if at any time, I find more reason to spare, I must not dare to spend it; still remembering, that as I am strictly to account for the money GOD has given me, so I ought neither to be covetous in saving, or boarding it up, nor profuse in throwing it away, without a just occasion. The main thing to be regarded, is, the end I propose to myself in my expences, whether it be really the glory of GOD, or my own carnal humour and appetite.

For instance, if I lay out my money in cloathing my body, the question must be, whether I do this only for warmth and decency, or to gratify my pride and vanity? If the former, my money is better spent; if the latter, it is better spared than spent: Again, do I lay it out in eating and drinking? If this be only to satisfy the necessities of nature, and make my life more easy and comfortable, it is, without doubt, very well spent; but if it be to feed my luxury and intemperance, it is much better spared; better for my soul in keeping it from sin, and better for my body in preserving it from sickness; and this rule is the more strictly to be observed, because it is as great a fault in a servant not to lay out his master's money when he should, as to lay it out when he should not.

In order, therefore, to avoid both these extremes, there is a third rule to be observed under this resolution; and that is, to keep a particular account

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account of all my receipts and disbursements, to set down in a book every penny I receive at the hands of the Almighty, and every penny I lay out for his honour and service. By this means I shall be, in a manner, forced both to get my money lawfully, and to lay it out carefully: But how can I put that amongst the money I have received from God, which I have got by unlawful means? Certainly, such money I may rather account as received from the devil for his use, than from God, for his. And so must I either lay every penny out for God, or otherwise I shall not know where to set it down, for I must set down nothing but what I lay out for his use; and if it be not for his use, with what face can I say it was? And, by this means also, when God shall be pleased to call me to an account for what I received from him, I may with comfort appear before him; and having improved the talents he had committed to my charge, I may be received into his heavenly kingdom, with a *well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into thy master's joy.*

RESOLUTION III.

I am resolved, by the Grace of GOD, to improve the Authority GOD gives me over others, to the suppression of Vice, and the encouragement of virtue: And so for the exaltation of God's Name on Earth, and their Souls in Heaven.

THAT all power and authority hath its original from God, and that one creature is not over another, but by the providence and will of him, who is over all; and so, by consequence, that all the authority we have over men, is to be improved for God. is clear, not only from that question, *Who made thee to differ from another? and, what hast thou, which thou didst not receive?* 1 Cor. iv. 7. but likewise, and that more clearly, from that positive assertion, *the powers that be, are ordained*

of God, Rom. xiii. 1. That, therefore, I may follow my commission, I must adhere to my present resolution, even in all the power God gives me, to behave myself as one invested with that power from above to restrain vice and encourage virtue, as oft as I have an opportunity so to do, always looking upon myself, as one commissioned by him, and acting under him. For this reason, I must still endeavour to exercise my authority; as if the most high God was in my place in person, as well as power. I must not follow the dictates of my own carnal reason, much less the humours of my own biased passion, but still keep to the acts which God himself hath made either in the general statute-book for all the world, the holy scriptures, or in the particular laws and statutes of the nation wherein I live.

And questionless, if I discharge this duty as I ought, whatever sphere of authority I move in, I am capable of doing a great deal of good, not only by my power, but by my influence and example. For common experience teaches us, that even the inclinations and desires of those that are eminent for their quality or station, are more powerful than the very commands of God himself; especially among persons of an inferior rank, and more servile disposition, who are apt to be more wrought upon by the fear of present punishment, or the loss of some temporal advantage, than any thing that is future or spiritual. Hence it is, that all those whom God entrusteth with this precious talent, have a great advantage and opportunity in their hand, for the suppressing sin, and the exalting holiness in the world: A word from their mouths against whoredom, drunkenness, and the profanation of the Sabbath, or the like; yea, their very example, and silent gestures, being able to do more than the threatenings of Almighty God, either pronounced by himself in his word, or by his ministers in his holy ordinances.

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This, therefore, is my resolution, that whatsoever authority the Most High God shall be pleased to put upon me, I will look upon it as my duty, and always make it my endeavour to demolish the kingdom of sin and Satan, and establish that of CHRIST and holiness, in the hearts of all those to whom my commission extends; looking more at the duty God expects from me, than at the dignity he confers upon me. In a word, I will so exercise the power and authority God puts into my hand here, that when the particular circuit of my life is ended, and I shall be brought to the general assize to give an account of this among my other talents, I may give it up with joy; and so exchange my temporal authority upon earth, for an eternal crown of glory in heaven.

RESOLUTION IV.

I am resolved, by the Grace of GOD, to improve the Affections God stirs up in others towards me, to the stirring up of their Affections towards God.

IF the authority I have over others, then questionless, the affection others have to me, is to be improved for God; and that because the affection they bear to me in a natural sense hath a kind of authority in me over them in a spiritual one. And this I gather from my own experience; for I find none to have a greater command over me, than they that manifest the greatest affection for me. Indeed, it is a truth generally agreed on, that a real and sincere esteem for any person, is always attended with a fear of displeasing that person; and where there is fear in the subject, there will, doubtless, be authority in the object; because fear is the ground of authority, as love is, or ought to be, the ground of that fear. The greatest potentate, if not feared, will not be obeyed; if his subjects

jects stand in no awe of him, he can never strike any awe upon them. Nor will that awe have its proper effects in curbing and restraining them from sin and disobedience, unless it proceeds from, and is joined with love.

I know the Scripture tells me, *There is no fear in love, but that perfect love casteth out fear,* 1 John iv. 18. But that is to be understood of our love to God, not to man, and that a perfect love too. In heaven, I know, our love will be consummate without mixture, as well as without defect; there, there will be a perfect expression of love on both sides, and so no fear of displeasure on either. But this is a happiness which is not to be expected here on earth; so long as we are clothed with flesh and blood, we shall in one degree or other be still under the influence of our passions and affections. And therefore, as there is no person we can love upon earth, but who may sometimes see occasion to be displeased with us; so he will always, upon this account, be feared by us. This I look upon as the chief occasion of one man's having so much power and influence over another.

But how comes this under the notion of a talent received from God, and so to be improved for him? Why, because it is he, and he alone, that kindles and blows up the sparks of pure love and affection in us, and that by the breathings of his own spirit. It was the LORD that gave Joseph favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison, Gen. xxxix. 21. And who brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs, Dan. i 9. And so of all others in the world: For we are told elsewhere, that as God fashioneth the hearts of men, so he turneth them which way soever he will: Insomuch that I can never see any express their love to me, but I must express my thankfulness to God for it; nor can I

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feel in myself any warmth of affection towards others, without considering it as a talent hid in my breast, which I am obliged in duty to improve for him by stirring up their affections unto him, whose affections himself hath stirred up towards me. And this will be the more easy to effect, if I take care, in the first place, to express the zeal and sincerity of my own love to God, by making him the chief object of my esteem and adoration, and manifest my aversion to the sins they are guilty of, by representing them as most loathsome and abominable, as well as most dangerous and damnable. For, wherever there is a true and cordial affection to any person, it is apt to bias those that are under the influence of it, to chuse the same objects for their love or aversion, that such a person does, *i. e.* to love what he loves, and to hate what he hates. This, therefore, is the first thing to be done, to stir up the affections of others to love and serve God.

Another way of my improving the affections of others to this end, is by setting them a good example; for commonly what a friend doth, be it good or bad, is pleasing to us, because we look not at the goodness of the thing that is done, but at the loveliness of the person that doth it. And if the vices of a friend seem amiable, how much more will their virtues shine? for this reason, therefore, whensoever I perceive any person to shew a respect for, or affection to me, I shall always look upon it as an opportunity put into my hands to serve and glorify my great Creator, and shall look upon it as a call from heaven, as much as if I heard the Almighty say to me, I desire to have this person love me, and therefore have I made him to love thee; do thou but set before him an example of goodness and virtue, and his love to thy person shall induce and engage him to direct his actions according to it. This therefore, is the rule that I
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fully resolve to guide myself by, with relation to those who are pleased to allow me a share in their esteem and affection, which I hope to improve to their advantage in the end : That as they love me, and I love them now, so we may all love God, and God love us to all eternity.

RESOLUTION V.

I am resolved, by the Grace of God, to improve every good Thought to the producing of good Affections in myself, and as good Actions with respect to God.

WHatsoever comes from God, being a talent to be improved to him, I cannot but think good thoughts to be as precious talents, as it is possible a creature can be blessed with. But let me esteem them as I will, I am sure my Master will reckon them amongst the talents he entrusts me with, and will call me to an account for them; and therefore I ought not to neglect them. The Scripture tells me, *I am not sufficient of myself to think any thing, as of myself, but that my sufficiency is of God*, 2 Cor. iii. 5. And if I be not sufficient to think any thing, much less am I able of myself to think of that which is good; forasmuch as to good thoughts there must always be supposed a special concurrence of God's Spirit; whereas to other thoughts there is only the general concurrence of his presence. Seeing therefore, they come from God, how must I lay them out for him? Why, by sublimating good thoughts into good affections. Does God vouchsafe to send down into my heart a thought of himself? I am to send up this thought to him again, in the fiery chariot of love, desire, and joy. Doth he dart into my soul a thought of holiness and purity? I am to dwell and meditate upon it, till it break out into a flame of love and affection for him. Doth he raise up in my spirit a thought of sin, and shew me the ugliness

ness and deformity of it? I must let it work its desired effect, by making it as loathsome and detestable as that thought represents it to be.

But good thoughts must not only be improved to produce affections in my heart, but likewise good actions in my life. So that the thoughts of God should not only make me more taken with his beauty, but more active for his glory; and the thoughts of sin should not only damp my affection to it, but likewise deter and restrain me from the commission of it.

And thus every good thought that God puts into my heart, instead of slipping out, as it does with some others without regard, will be cherished and improved to the producing of good actions: these actions will intitle me to the blessings of God, and that to the kingdom of glory.

RESOLUTION VI.

I am resolved, by the Grace of GOD, to improve every Affliction God lays upon me, as an Earnest or Token of his Affection towards me.

EVERY thing that flows from God to his servants, coming under the notion of talents, to be improved for himself, I am sure afflictions, as well as other mercies, must needs be reckoned amongst those talents God is pleased to vouchsafe. Indeed it is a talent, without which I should be apt to forget the improvement of all the rest; and which, if well improved, itself will *work out for me a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*, 2 Cor. iv. 7. 'Tis the non-improvement of an affliction that makes it a curse; whereas, if improved, 'tis as great a blessing as any God is pleased to scatter amongst the children of men. And therefore it is, that God most frequently entrusteth this precious talent with his own peculiar people; *You only have I known of all the families of the earth; there-*
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fore will I punish you for your iniquities, Amos iii. 2. Those that God knows the best, with them will he entrust the most, if not of other talents, yet be sure of this, which is so useful and necessary to bring us to the knowledge of ourselves and our Creator, that without it we should be apt to forget both.

It is this that shews us the folly and pride of presumption, as well as the vanity and emptiness of all worldly enjoyments, and deters us from incensing and provoking him, from whom all our happiness, as well as our afflictions, flow: Let therefore, what crosses or calamities soever befall me, I am still resolved to bear them all, not only with a patient resignation to the divine will, but even to comfort and rejoice myself in them, as the greatest blessings. For instance, am I seized with pain and sickness? I shall look upon it as a message from God, sent on purpose to put me in mind of death, and to convince me of the necessity of being always prepared for it by a good life, which a state of uninterrupted health is apt to make us unmindful of. Do I sustain any losses or crosses? The true use of this is, to make me sensible of the fickleness and inconstancy of this world's blessings, which we can no sooner cast our eye upon, but they immediately take to themselves wings, and fly away from us. And so, all other afflictions God sees fit to lay upon me, may, in like manner be, some way or other, improved for my happiness.

But, besides the particular improvements of particular chastisements, the general improvement of all is the increasing of my love and affection to that God, who brings these afflictions upon me. For how runs the mittimus, whereby he is pleased to send me to the dungeon of afflictions? *Deliver such a one to Satan to be buffeted in the flesh; that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus, 1 Cor. v. 5.* By this it appears, that the furnace of afflictions, which God is pleased at any time to throw

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throw me into, is not heated at the fire of his wrath. but at the flames of his affection to me. The consideration whereof, as it should more inflame my love to him, so shall it likewise engage me to express a greater degree of gratitude towards him, when he singles me out, not only to suffer from him, but for him too. For this is an honour indeed peculiar to the saints of God, which if he should be pleased ever to prefer me to, I shall look upon it as upon other afflictions, to be improved for his glory, the good of others, and the everlasting comfort of my own soul.

Thus have I reckoned up the talents God hath, or may put into my hand, to be improved for his glory. May the same divine being that entrusted me with them, and inspired me with these good resolutions concerning them, enable me, by his grace, to make a due use of them, and carefully to put in practice what I have thus religiously resolved upon.

There are some other mercies, which might be set down in the catalogue of talents, as the graces and motions of God's holy spirit, and the use of his holy ordinances, under the ministry of the gospel; but these being included and insisted on, under several of the foregoing heads, will not require a distinct consideration.

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